



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Westminster Scrutiny Commission**

Meeting Date: **Tuesday 22nd March, 2022**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue: **Rooms 18.06, 18.07 and 18.08 - 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**

Members: **Councillors:**

Karen Scarborough (Chairman)	Adam Hug
Iain Bott	Jim Glen
Gotz Mohindra	Tim Roca



Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.



An Induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Artemis Kassi, Senior Committee and Governance Officer.

**Email: akassi@westminster.gov.uk Tel: 078 1705 4991
Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk**

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting.

AGENDA

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary interests or any other significant interest in matters on this agenda.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd November 2021.

(Pages 5 - 12)

4. VERBAL UPDATES FROM POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Verbal updates from the Chairs of the following Policy and Scrutiny Committees:

- a. Adults and Public Health;
- b. Business and Children;
- c. Communities Regeneration and Housing; and
- d. Finance, Smart City & City Management.

5. LEADER'S UPDATE

To receive an update on current and forthcoming issues from Rachael Robathan, Leader of the Council.

(Pages 13 - 16)

6. CLIMATE EMERGENCY PROGRAMME

To receive and review a report on the Council's Climate Emergency Programme.

(Pages 17 - 28)

7. STAFF SURVEY 2021

Members to receive and comment on top level findings of the 2021 Staff Survey and action undertaken/planned to address issues.

(Pages 29 - 46)

8. COVID-19 UPDATE	(Pages 47 - 50)
To receive and review a report on Covid-19 cases, new outbreaks and variants of concern, and the rollout of vaccines.	
9. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON COUNCIL FINANCES	(Pages 51 - 54)
To review and receive a report on the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances.	
10. ANNUAL SCRUTINY REPORT	(Pages 55 - 80)
To review the final draft of the annual scrutiny report.	
11. WORK PROGRAMME	(Pages 81 - 82)
To discuss and make recommendations for the Commission's work programme for the next municipal year.	
12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS	

Stuart Love
Chief Executive
14 March 2022

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

22nd November 2021

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a hybrid meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** held virtually on 22nd November 2021 at 6.30pm via Microsoft Teams and in Rooms 18.01-03, 18th floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present:

Councillors: Karen Scarborough (Chairman), Jim Glen, Iain Bott, Aicha Less, Gotz Mohindra and Tim Roca.

Also Present:

Councillor Rachael Robathan (Leader of the Council), Stuart Love (Chief Executive of the Council), Mark Chalmers (Operational Contest Manager), Amy Jones (Director of Environment), John Hetherington (Head of Resilience, London Fire Brigade), Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Advisor), Calvin McLean (Director of Public Protection and Licensing), Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment and City Management), Mo Rahman (Head of Strategy and Performance), Anna Raleigh (Director of Public Health), Hannah Small (Policy and Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Nic Wells (Strategy Manager).

1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Councillor Adam Hug and Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis were unable to attend and sent their apologies.
- 1.2 Councillor Aicha Less and Councillor Tim Roca substituted for Councillor Adam Hug and Councillor Nafsika Butler-Thalassis respectively.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Chairman sought any personal or prejudicial interests in respect of the items to be discussed from members and officers, in addition to the standing declarations previously made. No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee was informed that the minutes from the previous Commission meeting held on 21st June 2021 would be circulated at a later date for approval.
- 3.2 **ACTION:** Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Advisor) to circulate the minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2021.

4. VERBAL UPDATES FROM POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- 4.1 The Committee heard verbal updates from the Policy and Scrutiny Chairs on their respective Policy and Scrutiny Committees.
- 4.2 The Chair for the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee updated the Commission on the following topics:
- the Extraordinary Meeting of the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 27th October 2021 on the Marble Arch Mound and the recommendations put forward by the Committee.
 - the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee on 7th October on the School Inclusion health and safety in schools policy. It was noted that this had been referred to this Committee by the Audit and Performance Committee and the School Inclusion Pilot.
 - The next Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee that will be taking place on 29th November and will receive an update on the Oxford Street Regeneration Project and interim themes from a Scrutiny Task Group looking into the mental health needs of children and young people across Westminster.
- 4.3 The Chair of the Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee updated the Commission on the following topics:
- Previous agenda items for the Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committees that have included; nuisance vehicles and local partners programme of work to tackle the issue, air quality in Westminster and the Council's air quality action plan, the capital works programme in relation to housing and a call-in on Church Street Sites A, B and C.
- 4.4 The Chair of the Adults and Public Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee updated the Commission on the following topics:
- The temporary closure of the inpatient units in the Gordon Hospital. The Committee has been focusing on working with CNWL to ensure these inpatient units re-open.

4.5 The Chair of the Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee updated the Commission on the following topics:

- The Extraordinary meeting of the Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 30th September 2021 on the recent flash floods that took place in Westminster.
- The Committee also scrutinised the Council's procurement strategy, this involved receiving deep dive case studies on the Council's major procurement contracts.

5. UPDATE FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

5.1 The Committee received a written and short verbal update from Councillor Rachael Robathan (Leader of the Council) who provided an update on current and forthcoming priorities for the Leader.

5.2 The Committee discussed the following topics in detail:

- Afghan refugees living in Westminster, including their accommodation, support provided and financial reimbursements by central government.
- The good growth fund and the allocation of funding to areas such as Harrow Road.
- The continuation of Al-Fresco schemes and long-term funding settlements for temporary schemes.

5.3 The Committee were told that approximately 300 adults and 400 child Afghan Refugees were being accommodated in the Northern part of the City in hotels. It was noted that this was temporary measure until permanent homes were located for these refugees across London and the country. Members asked if the Council had considered using temporary accommodation to house the refugees. Officers explained that these refugees were on a different support pathway and could not use temporary accommodation.

5.4 The Committee discussed the need to manage expectations amongst the refugee community, as due to limited available housing, permanent homes would likely be sought in outer London boroughs and further afield.

5.5 The Committee discussed the financial implications of supporting these refugees and funding from central Government. The Committee were informed that the Leader of the Council will be meeting with the Home Office to discuss the permanent resettlement of these refugees.

5.6 The Leader of the Council put on record her thanks to the volunteers and officers at Westminster Connects, who have been supporting the refugee community since they have arrived. Information on what donations are needed for this group can be found on the fortnightly Westminster Connects newsletter.

- 5.7 Concerning the good growth fund, Members of the Committee asked the Leader how the Council is distributing its resources evenly across the City to ensure areas such as Harrow Road received investment.
- 5.8 Concerning the temporary Al-Fresco schemes across the City, the Committee discussed the financing necessary to make some of these schemes permanent. Officers informed the Committee that the some of the larger Al-Fresco schemes were in part privately financed and that they would be different solutions for different areas.

6. COVID19 AND VACCINATION UPDATE

- 6.1 The Committee received a written and short verbal update from Anna Raleigh (Director of Public Health) who provided an update on Covid19 cases, outbreaks and the rollout of vaccinations across Westminster.
- 6.2 The Committee discussed the following topics in detail:
- The location of PCR testing centres across the City and the intended consequence this has caused by closing much loved community centres.
 - The engagement and guidance the Public Health team and Department for Health and Social Care have with university campuses.
 - The reasons behind Westminster's low Covid19 infection rate and low vaccination rate.
 - Vaccine hesitancy and the Councils programme of work to try and combat this.
- 6.3 Concerning the location of PCR testing centres across the City, the Committee discussed the intended consequence this caused by closing much loved community centres such as centre in Church Street. Officers informed the Commission that there were challenges in identifying suitable locations for PCR testing and there was limited suitable buildings across the City.
- 6.4 Members of the Commission asked whether the Council's public health team advise universities across the City on Covid19 related guidance. Officers informed the Committee that whilst the public health team works with Schools they have limited engaged with universities.
- 6.5 The Commission discussed how Westminster had a low infection as well as low vaccination rate. Officers stated that Outer London boroughs tended to have higher infection rates than inner London boroughs. Regarding the low vaccination rates, Officers informed the Commission they suspect the overall population data for Westminster is inaccurate and therefore the vaccination rates appear lower than they are.

6.6 Officers informed the Commission that one of public health's priorities was to ensure over 40's received their booster vaccine. Members asked what type of engagement the team were having hard to reach communities, Officers informed the Commission that they are using a hyper localised approach known as 'making every contact count', this involved working with 'covid champions' and identifying community leaders to engage with.

6.7 **ACTIONS:** The Committee requested that:

- Officers explore temporary locations for PCR testing sites in community centres.

6.8 **RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Committee recommended that:

- The Council's public health team accompanies housing officers as they conduct tenancy checks across the City to encourage local residents to get their vaccines and booster vaccines.

7. CLIMATE EMERGENCY UPDATE

7.1 The Commission received a written and short verbal update from Amy Jones (Director of Environment) who provided an update on the Council's Climate Emergency Programme.

7.2 The Commission discussed the following topics in detail:

- The incineration of recycling waste and the Councils programme of work to encourage more recycling across the City.
- Accountability on climate pledges and the Councils pledge to plant 2000 trees
- Measuring the impact of climate reduction and carbon offset initiatives across the City.
- Communal heating in tower blocks and encouraging residents to use heating appropriately.
- Future iterations of planning policy and how the Council can ensure it is as environmentally friendly as possible.

7.3 Concerning recycling rates across the City, the Commission were informed that the Council are conducting several pilots to encourage residents and businesses to recycle. These include door knocking and better communication from the Council.

7.4 The Commission discussed the accountability of climate pledges with particular reference to the Council's pledge to plant 2000 trees. The Leader of the Council acknowledged that this was a challenging pledge and enlisted the help of ward councillors to suggest locations of where these trees can be planted.

- 7.5 The Commission discussed that the Climate Emergency Action Plan was a living a document and the Council were learning and testing new ideas to tackle climate change regularly. The Commission discussed the importance of measuring impact, it was acknowledged that this was challenging to do as a City as a whole as the majority of emissions come from buildings not in the Councils control.
- 7.6 It was noted that the Council are working in partnership with businesses and local landowners in particular to address emissions produced from listed buildings. The Commission were informed that the Council and local partners were about to launch the Sustainable City Charter.
- 7.7 Members of the Commission asked Officers about communal heating in residential blocks. Members informed Officers that the communal areas of the residential blocks often got very hot and discussed what environmental impact this was having. The Commission discussed the balance between ensuring residents, including vulnerable residents, had access to heating throughout the winter and the environmental impact heating residential blocks has.
- 7.8 Concerning future iterations of planning policy, the Commission were discussing what levers the council had at their disposal to reduce carbon emissions.
- 7.9 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the report.

8. CITY FOR ALL UPDATE

- 8.1 The Commission received a written and short verbal update from Mo Rahman (Head of Strategy and Performance) and Nic Wells (Strategy Manager) who provided an update on the Council's City for All Strategy.
- 8.2 The Commission discussed the following topics in detail:
- The consultation and communication to residents about the City for All Strategy and how this can be improved.
 - The research methodology and sample size used within the City Survey and whether this sample size was representative.
 - How to avoid replicating voices when engaging with community groups and how to reach beyond usual engagement partners.
 - The input of policy and scrutiny committees into the City for All Strategy.
 - How the thriving economy fourth pillar is bedding in and how its interacting with the cleaner and greener pillar.
- 8.3 Concerning the consultation with residents and communication to residents of the City for All priorities, the Commission discussed how the consultation could avoid replicating voices when engaging with community groups and how to reach beyond usual engagement partners. Officers informed the Commission that they had

received similar feedback from the Youth Council who stated that they should engage directly with youth clubs on the strategy.

- 8.4 The Commission discussed in detail the methodology and sample size behind the City Survey. Officers informed the Commission that there the sample size was 2500 and that this was statistically significant and representative of residents across Westminster.
- 8.5 Members of the Commission pressed Officers on the involvement of Policy and Scrutiny Committees in shaping the City for All priorities. Members asked if the Strategy to come to the Committees before it was formulated in order to have input. It was agreed that the Strategy would come before the Committees to be scrutinised once published.
- 8.6 The Commission discussed whether the phrase 'city' was recognised by all residents, especially those in the north of the Borough. Officers informed the Commission that the Councils messaging, specifically 'a city for all' was well known by residents.
- 8.7 Concerning the fourth pillar of the City for All Strategy, a thriving economy, the Commission discussed how it was bedding in and interacting with the other priorities, particularly the cleaner and greener priority. Senior Officers said the two priorities were working well with one another and in some areas, businesses were encouraging the Council to go hard and faster with their cleaner and greener commitments.
- 8.8 **ACTIONS:** The Commission recommended that:
- Officers provide the questions within the City Survey to the Commission to help guide the scrutiny of the City for All Strategy
- 8.9 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the report.

9. ANNUAL EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS REPORT

- 9.1 The Commission received a written report from Raj Mistry, Executive Director of Environment and City Management, and Mark Chalmers (Operational Contest Manager) on the Council's annual emergency preparedness report.
- 9.2 The Commission welcomed John Hetherington, Head of London Resilience at the London Fire brigade to the Commission as an expert witness. John praised the Council and its partners, stating that Westminster is thought of very highly by partners as a category 1 responder.

9.3 The Commission discussed the following topics in detail:

- If the Council can conduct incident management training with ward Councillors, as often Ward Councillors are the first to hear of emergency incidents.
- The need for urgent communication from the Council when an emergency takes place. The Commission were informed that urgent comms had been developed for major incidents and that residents would be directed to the Councils website.
- If the Council conducts scenario planning with Officers to test their response skills.

9.4 Concerning the flash floods that took place in Westminster in July 2021, the Commission asked for this issue to be scrutinised by the Westminster Commission and not just the Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee as the floods were in part regarding climate change.

9.5 Members asked Officers present whether Councillors could be trained in incident management, as often ward Councillors are first to respond to local issues.

9.6 The Commission discussed how Westminster's response to the flash floods compared with neighbouring Boroughs. It was noted that like for like comparisons were not possible due to the differing number of residents affected in each Borough.

9.7 Concerning the improvement of urgent communication to residents affected by emergency incidents, Officers updated the Commission that urgent communication had been drafted for major incidents such as flooding. This would enable residents to receive quicker communication from the Council on the Council's websites. Members enquired if direct communication to residents, via text or email would be appropriate if a manage incident had taken place in their ward.

9.8 The Commission were informed that the Officers undertake incident management training to test their responses and improve these if needed. This training is London wide, but the Council also undertakes internal training as well.

9.9 The Commission Members and Leader of the Council put on record their thanks to the London Fire Brigade for their quick response on the night of the July floods.

10. WORK PROGRAMME

10.1 Members discussed the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

11. END OF MEETING

11.1 The Chairman formally closed the meeting at 8.47pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____



City of Westminster

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 March 2022
Classification: General Release
Title: Leader's Update
Report of: Cllr Rachael Robathan

1. Refugees in Westminster

- 1.1. Approximately 260 Afghan evacuees have moved from their bridging accommodation in Westminster, with 330 remaining in the hotel. There have also been 15 people (four families) move out into settled accommodation since last week's moves, and another 13 (three families) with offers awaiting a move in the coming weeks, including a second family to be housed in Westminster after one family was successfully housed in January.
- 1.2. Evacuees will be transferred to bridging accommodation across the UK; in the first phase evacuees from Westminster's bridging hotel moved to 15 other hotels. The hotel team have been working with leads in the receiving local authorities to discuss the handover process and what families can expect when they arrive at their new hotels. Information sharing with young people's new schools has begun where these are known, and medical records have been transferred.
- 1.3. Following the recent invasion of Ukraine, we are in touch with Home Office and DHLUC colleagues as the government develops further guidance for refugees and for local authorities. In the meantime, we have set up a web page to signpost support resources for our Ukrainian residents and their families, which can be viewed here: [Ukraine Crisis Help and Support](#).

2. City for All

- 2.1. On 3 March, the Council launched a refreshed City for All strategy for 2022/23. It sets out how we will support our communities and businesses to recover from the pandemic and build a stronger City for All.
- 2.2. It also focuses on building a city fit for future generations that guarantees smarter technology, tackles the climate emergency, and ensures our diverse communities are ready to thrive.
- 2.3. The strategy document can be viewed here: [City for All Vision and Strategy 2022/23](#).

3. Staff Awards

- 3.1. The Westminster Way Staff Awards 2021 are taking place on Monday 21 March 2022 at the QEII Conference Centre after the event scheduled for December was postponed due to Covid-19. The event will also be lived streamed.
- 3.2. In 2021 a record breaking 424 nominations from staff across the 11 award categories. The winners for ten out of the 11 categories were selected by a judging panel and the Staff Choice winner is voted for by staff. Winners will be announced at the ceremony on 21 March 2022.

4. Pay Awards

- 4.1. This year's annual pay award has been agreed at an increase of 1.75%, effective from Thursday 1 April 2021.
- 4.2. Employees who are entitled to the increase will see the new rates applied in their March salary, with back dated arrears also paid in March.
- 4.3. Those staff on spot salaries such as former City West Homes staff and Apprentices will also receive an increase of 1.75% and will be back dated to Thursday 1 April 2021 with the new salary and arrears applied in March.

5. Government relations activity

- 5.1. Paul Scully, Minister for London, wrote to the Leader in December asking for the top three issues and opportunities currently facing Westminster, which we advised were West End recovery and long-term prosperity (including the introduction of an online sales tax), the climate emergency, and homelessness and rough sleeping. The Leader will meet with the Minister in mid-March to discuss these issues in more detail.

- 5.2. The Government has recently announced their online sales tax consultation which we are preparing a response to. We are working closely with BIDs and other partners to ensure our position represents the interests, and has the support, of businesses in Westminster.
- 5.3. The Leader has recently written to Nigel Huddleston MP to reiterate our position around short-term lets and to highlight aspects that should form part of the government's call for evidence and consultation. Through the consultation, the council will be seeking new powers to target owners through the registration scheme, and powers for local authorities to introduce exemptions for high impact areas. The letter also received coverage in the Financial Times and the Evening Standard.
- 5.4. The Government have asked us to re-think the areas across which we are applying our Article 4 directions. Officers are re-working a more targeted proposal alongside DHLUC officials to refine our Article 4 to secure protection for commercial land uses in the CAZ from permitted development rights.

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Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 March 2022

Classification: General Release

Title: Climate Emergency Programme: Action Plan Implementation Update

Report of: Raj Mistry, Executive Director for Environment and City Management

Cabinet Member Portfolio: Cllr Rachael Robathan, Leader of the Council

Wards Involved: All

Policy Context: City for All

Report Author and Contact Details: Amy Jones
Director of Environment
ajones9@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In September 2019, Westminster City Council's Full Council meeting declared a climate emergency and committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2030 for the Council and by 2040 for the wider City. In addition, by 2050 the Council committed to be a zero-carbon emitter, without needing to offset any of its emissions.
- 1.2 A [Climate Emergency Action Plan](#) (CEAP) for Westminster was published in November 2021, setting out nearly 70 ambitious actions across five themes of Efficient Buildings, Clean and Affordable Energy, Sustainable Travel & Transport, Reducing Consumption & Waste and Green & Resilient City. The Plan is intended to be a living document with certain elements being regularly reviewed, and the whole plan being fully reviewed after three years.
- 1.3 The Climate Emergency team presented most recently to the Westminster Scrutiny Commission in November 2021 and covered progress towards the 2030 net zero target for the council, a selection of key 2040 actions, and next steps with partnership working. This new update will summarise progress and achievements during 2021-22, as well as provide a brief look ahead at next steps and challenges.

2. Progress and Achievements during 2021-22

- 2.1 One key achievement during 2021 has been the publication of the Climate Emergency Action Plan (CEAP) for Westminster and the public engagement surrounding this. Whilst the net zero targets remain our final goal, the CEAP has provided clearer interim targets to work towards and to measure our progress against.
- 2.2 Over the past year we have improved our governance and reporting processes around the CEAP actions, and this work will continue throughout 2022. Recent progress includes embedding our carbon assessment toolkit within project planning, enabling us to predict more clearly the carbon impact of future projects. We have also worked with departments to implement a new single reporting mechanism for all climate projects.
- 2.3 We have continued to monitor our performance against our emissions reduction trajectories. A brief summary of the most recent emissions data is provided below, for both the council and the wider city.

Council Emissions (Currently includes scopes 1, 2 and limited scope 3)

Financial year	Actual emissions (tCO ₂ e)	Target for change in emissions (%) (Assuming a linear reduction)	Actual change in emissions (%)
2018-19	44,619 (Current baseline)	N/A	N/A
2019-20	42,770	-8.3%	-4.1%
2020-21	39,535	-9.1%	-7.5%
2021-22	Awaiting data	-10.0%	Awaiting data

City-Wide Emissions (Currently includes scopes 1 & 2)

Open Data Source	Actual emissions (tCO ₂)	Change in emissions (%)
BEIS website	1,924,785 (2017) 1,876,551 (2018) 1,700,921 (2019)	2017 to 2018: -2.5% 2018 to 2019: -6% (-11% from 2017)

- 2.3 The section below summarises the main achievements of the climate programme during 2021 and early 2022. Most of these achievements relate directly to one or more of the actions within the CEAP.
- 2.4 *Key climate programme achievements during 2021-22 (covering 2030 and 2040 targets) – Please note this list is not exhaustive.*

2.5 Capability Building

- **Carbon Assessment Toolkit:** We have developed and launched a bespoke Carbon Assessment Toolkit in partnership with GEP Environmental, which will allow project managers across the council to predict the carbon impact of proposed projects. One application of the tool will be to assess the carbon impact of all future bids submitted to the council's Capital Programme.
- **Staff Capability:** We delivered carbon literacy training to 69 staff (with more training sessions planned in the coming months) and continue to develop the role of the Green Champions staff network.

2.6 Efficient Buildings & Clean and Affordable Energy

- **Social Housing Portfolio:** We are progressing towards our target of retrofitting 100 of our least energy-efficient social homes by the end of March 2022. Progress during 2021 includes installing electric heating in 52 homes, installing insulation measures in a further 40 homes, and starting to roll out heat pump pilots. We have also recently been awarded £3.3 million from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which will enable the retrofit of a further 360 homes.
- **Corporate Property (Operational Portfolio):** We are retrofitting 63 properties and have made excellent progress towards the target completion date of March 2022. The total energy savings will be c.1,700 tCO₂e representing a 19% decrease in carbon emissions by March 2023. Key achievements to date include completing pipework insulation and draught proofing projects, whilst the LED lighting rollout is almost complete. We are also delivering the BEMS optimisation and EC fan replacement projects, with the pool cover project starting shortly. The installation works for both solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps are also on track, including the recent completion of a 90 panel solar array at the Queen Mother Sports Centre and a 416 panel solar array at Moberly Sports Centre.
- **LED Lighting:** We will have replaced 93% of our streetlights with LEDs by the end March 2022, totalling nearly 14,500 lamps, and saving 1,335 tonnes of carbon in total.
- **Council-Led Developments:** We have pushed the decarbonisation of council-led developments further, including incorporating heat pumps into Luxborough Street and Queen's Park Court developments, and targeting Passivhaus standard for Westmead and Darwin House developments. We also secured funding to retrospectively replace gas boilers with heat pumps at the Ashbridge and Ashmill schemes.
- **Town Planning Action Plan:** Our Town Planning team are developing an action plan that will target the following key areas relevant to the climate programme: supporting retrofit of historic buildings, supporting

householders to retrofit, upskilling planning staff, and developing a consistent approach to demolition and embodied carbon analysis.

- **Carbon Offset Fund:** We are developing a new approach to spending funds from our Carbon Offset Fund (current value £4mn), with a project to ringfence an initial £1mn to deliver energy efficiency improvements to community buildings in Westminster. This will consist of an end-to-end service, with the council facilitating industry expertise and grant funding to help communities identify and install cost effective carbon savings. Pending awarding of the funds, the project will launch in 2022. We are also undertaking a review of the guidance underpinning the fund, with the aim of making it more accessible to potential applicants and focusing on delivering cost-effective carbon savings in the community.
- **ESPD and CoCP:** We published our new Code of Construction Practice in February 2022, and this will be shortly followed by the final Environmental Supplementary Planning Document. Both policies will be key in helping to drive down emissions from the construction and renovation of buildings across the city.
- **Sustainable City Charter:** We collaborated with the Westminster Property Association on the publication of a research paper on retrofitting historic buildings and on a Statement of Intent on the Sustainable City Charter. We will continue to work in partnership with the WPA to develop the Sustainable City Charter, with the aim of launching the Charter in June 2022.

2.7 Sustainable Travel and Transport

- **Fleet Electrification:** In September 2021 we unveiled a new 60-strong electric fleet containing waste, street cleansing and delivery vehicles. Preparations are now underway to upgrade the entire waste collection vehicle fleet to electric and to secure an ongoing electricity supply for waste vehicles at SELCHP, powered by electricity generated from the city's waste.
- **EV Charging Rollout:** We are progressing towards our target of having 1,500 EV charge points across the city, including 30 rapid chargers, by the end of March 2022. During 2021 we installed a further 451 EV charging points and became the first local authority to pass 1,000 EV charging points in total.
- **School Streets:** We launched our trial of 10 new School Streets at primary schools across the city. School Streets are created using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, and prohibit vehicles from entering the streets during operating hours, thereby improving air quality, emissions and noise pollution around schools.
- **Cycle Lanes:** We consulted on the future of the 11 temporary cycle lanes installed as part of our Covid-19 Movement Strategy. Following high levels of support for keeping the lanes, we are now developing proposals to ensure these lanes can be kept permanently.

- **Homecare travel:** Our Adult Social Care teams have identified ways of reducing travel associated with our homecare contracts including by moving to a system of homecare recipients using personal assistants who are more local to them and finding ways to avoid duplicating visits from NHS staff and contractors.
- **E-Scooter Rental Trial:** We joined the TfL e-scooter rental trial scheme in August 2021. Since the launch, the trial has demonstrated strong safety records and by the end of 2021 we had achieved 500,000 trips undertaken by e-scooter. Westminster now has 69 e-scooter parking bays, and across the 10 boroughs taking part in the scheme, 25% of the e-scooter trips have been undertaken in Westminster.
- **Partnership Working:** We are co-leading the London Councils Low-Carbon Transport Programme, which has an ambition to halve petrol and diesel road journeys by 2030. Through this we have helped develop an action plan focusing on areas including improved data, research into demand management interventions and reducing emissions from freight and servicing. We also continue to work closely with landowners and businesses to implement our Freight, Servicing and Deliveries (FSD) Strategy, including through the monthly FSD-focused Zero Emissions Group.

2.8 Reduced Consumption and Waste

- **Household Food Waste Collection:** We completed the planning and preparation ahead of launching our food waste collection service in early 2022. The first wards to receive the new service will be Abbey Road and Regent's Park in February 2022. In total the new service aims to divert around 3,000 tonnes of food waste a year away from incineration and into anaerobic digestion instead.
- **Responsible Procurement and Commissioning Strategy:** We finalised a new approach to the council's £500 million annual spend on third party contracts, with a strong climate-focused element. The new strategy requires all suppliers for contracts over £2 million to have an action plan for reducing their emissions to net zero, and has also introduced an additional 5% climate action weighting to all applicable tenders. Work is also ongoing with the council's ten highest-carbon contracts to drive down their emissions, as well as to improve our understanding of the council's full scope 3 emissions.
- **Highways Carbon Reduction:** Following the successful King Street low-carbon highway repair pilot in 2020 (which saved 79% on operational emissions compared to an average project), 6 new schemes are now using similar methods to cut emissions. We have also worked with FM Conway to calculate the carbon intensity per £1 million spent on our highways contract and have set a target to reduce this from the current level of 374 tonnes per £1 million down to 90.5 tonnes per £1 million.

2.9 Engagement (see a selection of photos below in Appendix B)

- **Resident Engagement:** We have carried out a wide range of resident climate engagement during 2021-22, including:
 - Community engagement activities in summer 2021 to gather views on our draft Climate Action Plan. Activities included an online survey, pop-up street stalls, and workshops with the VCS and young people. In total 366 people took part in these activities.
 - Two 'carbon bubble' events at Westminster Cathedral Piazza (July 2021) and Trafalgar Square (October 2021), which featured a balloon to visually demonstrate the size of 1 tonne of carbon. Activities were provided for children and visitors were encouraged to sign up to a personal carbon-reduction pledge through the 'Count Us In' platform.
 - Two Community Climate Action Open Days, one in the north of the borough in November 2021, and another in the south of the borough in February 2022. Both Open Days were free to visitors and featured a wide variety of stalls and activities relating to local climate and sustainability initiatives. Both open days were very popular.
 - An Open Forum Q&A session in January 2022, where Cabinet Members and the Director of Environment took questions from residents on our work to tackle the climate emergency. There were 109 views of the event and over 50 questions were submitted online.
 - A joint seminar with the Westminster Property Association in February 2022 to launch a retrofit research paper and to signal intent on the Sustainable City Charter. The event was attended by over 280 people (in-person and online).
- **Schools Engagement:** We have strengthened our partnership with local schools over the past year, and have delivered the following:
 - A Climate Action Classrooms competition with local schools in 2021, culminating in an exhibition of the entries in Westminster libraries during early 2022.
 - Piloting a Climate Education workshop in schools, which we are now rolling out to 20 primary schools across the city during 2022, with the first set of workshops taking place in February 2022.

3. Next Steps and Challenges

- 3.1 Looking ahead, whilst good progress has been made across many areas (as outlined above), there remain substantial challenges. Some key challenges include accurately measuring and achieving reductions in emissions from areas outside of the council's control, ensuring sufficient capacity across departments to deliver actions, and meeting the substantial future funding requirements of the programme.

- 3.2 To address these challenges, we will need to take bold action over the next year. This will include increasing staff capacity to work on the climate programme across departments, considering overall programme spend, and forging closer relationships with external partners who will be essential to driving down emissions from areas outside of the council's direct control.
- 3.3 The process of forging closer relationships with key partners will be pursued in part through the further development of the Climate and Air Quality Alliance during 2022. The Alliance will have an open model which brings everyone in Westminster with an interest in climate together at semi-regular community forums. This will be complemented with regular targeted engagement with key stakeholders, as well as with the future development of an online Alliance platform.
- 3.4 Over the year ahead we will continue to push ahead with the actions listed in section two above. We also aim to accelerate action in various additional areas, including the following:
- Raising the local cost of carbon through a new Planning Obligations SPD
 - Developing and agreeing a Clean Heat Strategy for the future of PDHU
 - Developing a Green Economy Strategy to help promote the transition to a circular economy
 - Working more closely with registered social landlords and private landlords to retrofit properties
 - Procuring support to develop a Local Area Energy Plan for Westminster

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact
Amy Jones ajones9@westminster.gov.uk**

Appendix A: Climate Emergency Programme 2021 Achievement Infographics

WCC CE Activities – 2021 Achievements

Published the Climate Emergency Action Plan

Delivered a series of engagement activities (surveys, street stalls, workshops) between June – August to identify priority areas



With Anthesis, created an initial recommendation report, holding internal workshops to discuss the findings

Worked with internal directorates to establish an emission baseline for 2018 / 19



Published a draft plan to obtain resident and external feedback – facilitated this further with online workshops

Held numerous sessions with each directorate to identify action owners, agree timelines and high level outcomes for the first set of CEAP actions.

Directorates have worked to integrate the CE Team in to governance and operational activities.



Hosted our first Community Action Day in November – more planned in 2022

Continued to support 2030 action delivery. Used CAG to set the strategic direction and CEDB to improve the governance & monitor programme progress.

Created the **Carbon Assessment Toolkit**. Will be used to carry out carbon assessments of all WCC projects.

Finalised the announcement of the Sustainable City Charter Statement of Intent



Delivered Carbon Literacy Training to 55 WCC Staff, with 8 more sessions by March 2023



Hosted Carbon Bubble events in July & November

Completed the pilot of Climate Education workshops in primary schools – further rollout in 2022



Launched 'Climate Action Classroom' Competition encouraging action in schools

Updated how the Carbon Offset Fund is to be utilised – to release in 2022



WCC CE Activities – 2021 Achievements

Installed clean heat measures (electric heaters) in 46 homes in 2021

LED Rollout Efficiency: At the end of 2021, 95% of installs had been completed, meaning nearly 14,500 lamp columns replaced



A further 13 School Streets are set to be launched in 2022 after all the preparation work completed in 2021

Produced the Environmental Supplementary Planning Document (ESPD) – set to be approved in early 2022

Continued to expand the size and role of the Green Champions, improving the climate culture in Westminster

Co-led the London Councils climate programme on Low Carbon Transport and presented on several topics at the LC Borough Climate Conference



Installed energy efficiency measures (insulation) in 27 homes in 2021.



In September, WWC and Veolia unveiled a 60-strong fleet of new and upcycled electric vehicles

Decarbonising Council Developments: Reduced the average operational energy demand of schemes by approximately 70% since 2016.

Completed the planning and obtained approval to launch an expanded food waste rollout – set to be launched in Spring 2022.



Decarbonising Council Developments: Air source heat pumps incorporated into Luxborough St and Queens Park Court developments. Westmead and Darwin House developments progressing with Passivhaus targets.



Installed 451 EV charge points in 2021, including 442 shared power supply charge points for residents. **Became the first local authority to reach 1000 charge points.**

Contributed to the Westminster Property Association White Paper on Retrofit

Integrated CEAP targets into new responsible procurement approach and review of carbon emissions for WCC's top 10 suppliers. In depth review of Scope 3 emissions.

6 schemes progressed aimed at trialing new methods to reduce the carbon impact of highways maintenance. King St Pilot: 79% reduction in operational carbon and a 50% reduction in embedded carbon.



Homecare re-modelling identified opportunities to reduce travel by 1) by aligning the geographical footprint for contractors with local NHS footprints and 2) Proposing increasing the use of local personal assistance to increase local employment and reduce travel time.

Appendix B: Photos from Climate engagement events in 2021-22



Engagement events and pop-up stalls, Summer 2021



Carbon Bubble event at Trafalgar Square, October 2021



Climate Ed workshop at St Mary's of the Angels, October 2021



First Community Climate Action Open Day, November 2021



Climate Action Classrooms Exhibition Launch, January 2022



Building a Net Zero Future joint event with WPA, February 2022



Second Community Climate Action Open Day, February 2022

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Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22 March 2021

Classification: General Release

Title: Our Voice 2021 – Staff Engagement Survey

Report of: Lee Witham, Director of People Services

Cabinet Member Portfolio Leader of the Council

Wards Involved: All

Policy Context: City for All

**Report Author and
Contact Details:** **Natalie Monaghan**
nmonaghan@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

This is the fifth year of running our staff survey in this format. The survey provides a measure of the level of engagement staff have with the Council and therefore highlights areas of focus for the wider people strategy, the Westminster Way.

The overall Engagement Index for 2021 is 74%. This is a decrease of 4% from 2020 (78%) and an increase of 2% from 2019 (72%). Although the engagement index has reduced in 2021, overall engagement has continued to increase at WCC since 2017, from 66% to 74%. See table below.

Engagement Index	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall Engagement Index	66%	70%	72%	78%	74%

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

This paper summarises the headline results of the 2021 staff survey "Our Voice". The Commission is asked to:

- Review and note the Our Voice results from 2021 and provide views and input on the Westminster City Council Our Voice results.

3. Background

Westminster City Council's staff survey, Our Voice, ran from 13 September to 1 October 2021. This is a Bi-Borough survey run in partnership with Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC). The survey provides a measure of the level of engagement staff have with the Council and therefore highlights areas of focus for the wider people strategy, the Westminster Way. The headline measure is the Employee Engagement Index. This is a collection of six questions that measure the relationship between employees and the organisation, it's about more than satisfaction. Engagement is a good indicator of how connected employees are to the organisation in helping us to achieve City For All

In 2021 we have a new provider for the survey, People Insight. People Insight have advised that a number of organisations have seen a dip in engagement scores this year in comparison to 2020. This is due to 2020 being an exceptional year, and engagement scores were perhaps exaggerated. For that reason, it is important that comparisons are made to both 2020 and 2019.

4. Headline Results

The overall Engagement Index for 2021 is 74%. This is a decrease of 4% from 2020 (78%) and an increase of 2% from 2019 (72%). Although the engagement index has reduced in 2021, overall engagement has continued to increase at Westminster City Council since 2017, from 66% to 74%.

Engagement Index	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Overall Engagement Index	66%	70%	72%	78%	74%

The response rate was 67% which was down 9% from 2020 and down 3% from 2019.

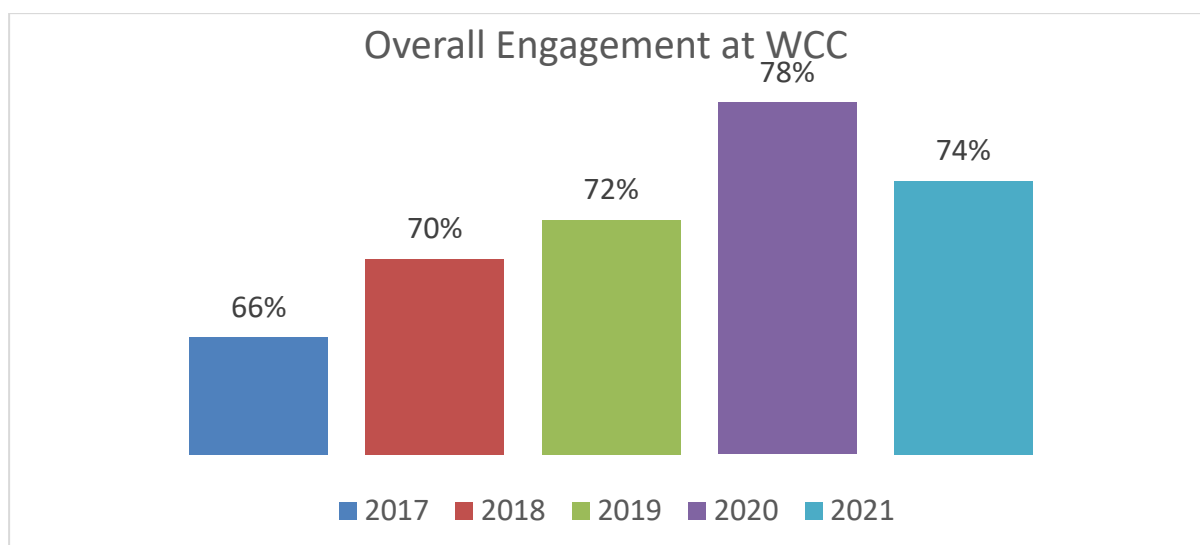
Out of 47 questions, since 2020;

- 8 have improved (by at least one percentage point)
- 9 have stayed in line since 2020
- 27 have reduced since 2020 (by at least one percentage point)

When comparing against 2019;

- 36 have improved (by at least one percentage point)
- 2 have stayed in line
- 4 have reduced (by at least one percentage point)

Taking time to understand the results, build on the strengths and plan for improvements will be critical in continuing to achieve best in class results in the future.



Overall engagement has continued to increase at Westminster City Council since 2017. Whilst the decrease from 2020 to 2021 is notable, the scores in 2020 may have been exaggerated by the timing of the survey taking place in September 2020, early in the pandemic. Overall, there is a clear upward trend which would suggest that whilst some of the increase in 2020, and subsequent decrease in 2021, may be down to influences of the pandemic, the people strategy and focus on colleague engagement continues to have a positive impact.

The table below illustrates the six questions that measure our Employee Engagement index scores from the period 2017 to 2021.

Engagement Index	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	Trend 2017 to 2021	2021 result v Local Government Benchmark (2020)
I would recommend the council as a great place to work	53%	61%	66%	76%	70%	+17%	+6
If I were a member of the public contacting the council, I would be confident of a good service	56%	61%	58%	67%	63%	+7%	+5%
Working here makes me want to do the best work I can	76%	80%	81%	86%	83%	+7%	+7%
I am proud to work for the council	70%	74%	77%	82%	78%	+8%	+7%
I feel a strong sense of belonging to the council	50%	54%	54%	63%	60%	+10%	+6%
I am committed to helping the council meet its goals and objectives	89%	89%	91%	93%	92%	+3%	+4%
Overall Engagement Index	66%	70%	72%	78%	74%	+8%	+5%

Questions with the biggest increase

- The environment(s) I work in, be it working in an agile way or a council building/in the borough, enables me to do my job effectively increased by 7% compared to 2020 and by 9% from 2019.

- My People leader gives me clear and honest feedback that helps me to improve my performance increased by 3% compared to 2020 and by 6% from 2019.
- Senior leaders are sufficiently visible where I work increased by 2% compared to 2020 and reduced by 3% from 2019.
- Different teams work really well together increased by 2% from 2020 and by 6% from 2019).

Questions with the biggest decrease

- I am able to make decisions that are best for residents and communities, decreased by 10% from 2020.
- I am kept up to date about important changes along with the reasons for them, and what is happening across the council, decreased by 9% from 2020 (+1% from 2019).
- I have the opportunity to improve our services by seeking and using feedback from users, decreased by 9% from 2020 (and decreased 4% from 2019).
- I think it's safe to speak up and challenge the way things are done, decreased by 8% from 2020 (and decreased by 4% from 2019).
- I feel supported in my mental health and wellbeing decreased by 7% compared to 2020.

Westminster Way Index

In addition to the above indices, we also introduced a “Westminster Way” index in 2019 to measure the impact of the changes we are making as part of our people strategy. The scores are provided in the table below.

Westminster Way Indices	2019	2020	2021	Trend from 2020	Trend from 2019
Overall Westminster Way Index	63%	68%	67%	-1%	+ 4%
Everyone is a leader	62%	65%	64%	-1%	+2%
Everyone is valued	65%	71%	67%	-4%	+2%
Everyone has talent	60%	63%	64%	+1%	+4%
Enablers	67%	75%	79%	+4%	+12%

5. Next Steps

Following the results, an insight and feedback presentation was held with People Insight and the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). This was an opportunity to discuss the key findings from the survey in detail, and to identify areas for future focus.

Headline results have been taken to Cabinet and Executive Directors have received their directorate level results reports. Following this, Executive Directors

have discussed their results with their Leadership Teams and agreed team level action plans which are being implemented.

At a corporate level we use the findings from the survey to inform future developments to the Westminster Way and corporate priorities such as Diversity and Inclusion, employee experience, health and wellbeing. In practice this means helping directorates to bring localised action plans to life by providing specialist advice and support tailored to the outcomes of the 'Our Voice' survey. These actions plans will be monitored to support the achievement of the Councils priorities and as part of our commitment in ensuring that we are an inclusive employer.

In April 2022 we will see the launch of the new Health and Wellbeing Strategy which has been developed using insight from the Our Voice Survey and feedback from staff.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Natalie Monaghan
nmonaghan@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Our Voice 2021 - WCC overall results report

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WCC 2021 Survey

Survey closed 1 October 2021

Responses: 1833

Response rate: 67%

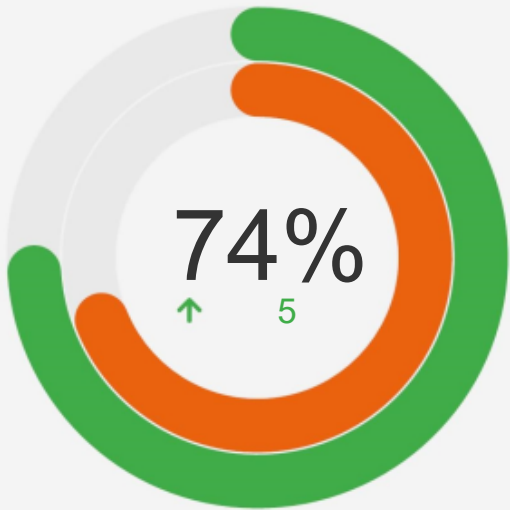
Comparator: Local Authorities



What is our Engagement score?



The Engagement score is 74%, which is good when compared with the norms for Local Authorities



● Your score ● Local Authorities norm

Items comprising the Engagement score

Question	Response favourability			Comparison
I am committed to helping the Council meet its goals and objectives	92%	7%	1%	n/a
I am proud to work for the Council	78%	16%	5%	+9
I feel a strong sense of belonging to the Council	60%	26%	14%	n/a
I would recommend the Council as a great place to work	70%	21%	9%	+3
If I was a member of the public contacting the Council, I would be confident of a good service	63%	27%	10%	n/a
Working here makes me want to do the best work I can	83%	13%	4%	+3

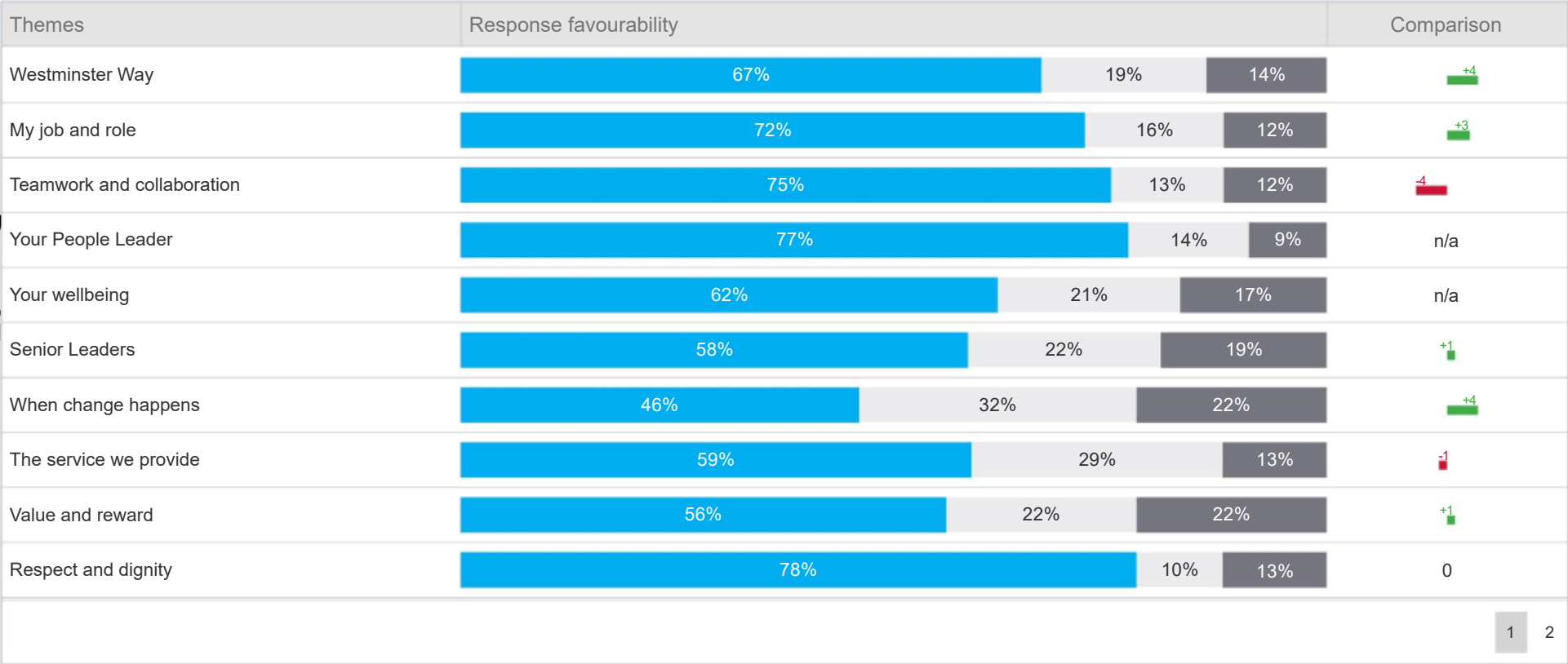
● Favourable ● Neutral ● Unfavourable

What are our Theme scores?



Average scores for questions grouped by a common theme

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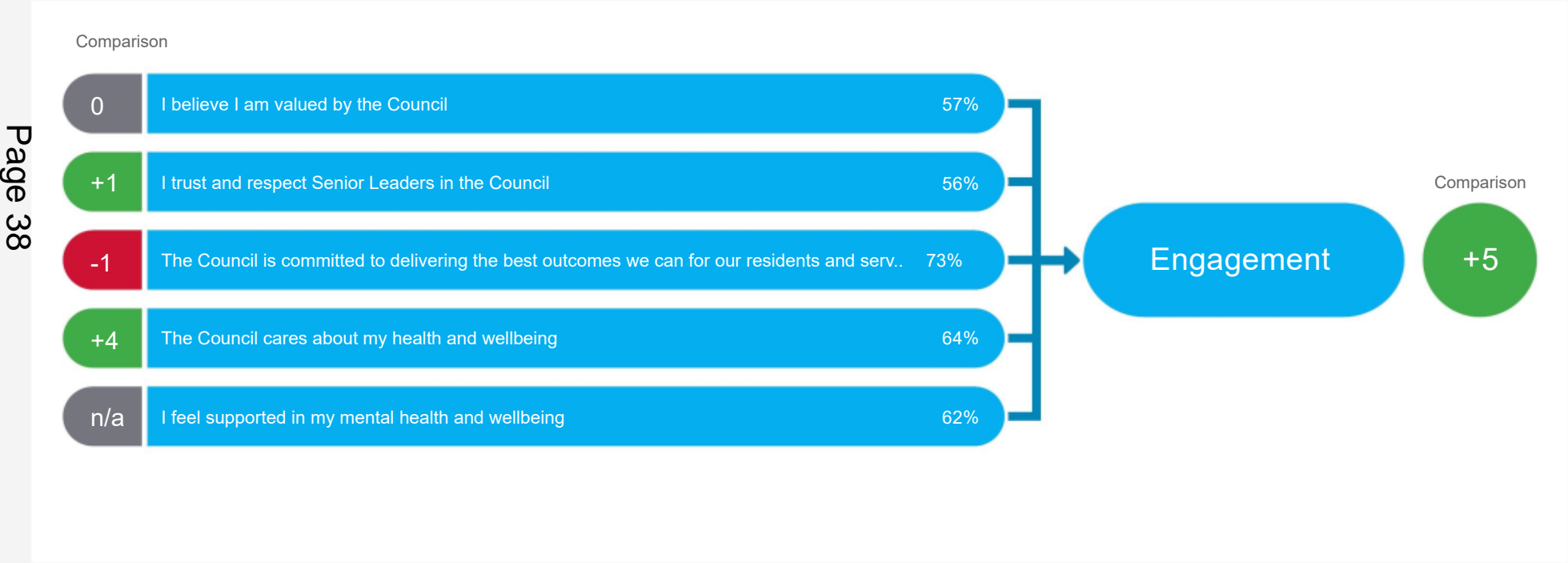


What is driving our Engagement score?



Key drivers

These 5 items have the strongest relationship with Engagement . Improvements in these are likely to have the biggest impact.



What are our comparative strengths?



These 5 results are the strongest when compared with the norms for Local Authorities

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Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Comparison
	The environment(s) I work in, be it working in an agile way or a council building/in the borough, enables me to do my job effectively	Westminster Way	82%	11%	7%	+13
	Considering the way I am currently working, I have the equipment and resources I need to do my job well	Westminster Way	76%	12%	12%	+11
	I am proud to work for the Council	Engagement index (new)	78%	16%	5%	+9
	Different teams work really well together	Westminster Way	53%	28%	19%	+9
	I am treated fairly and with respect by the people I work with	Westminster Way	81%	11%	9%	+6

Favourable Neutral Unfavourable

What are our comparative weaknesses?



These 5 results are the weakest (or least strong) when compared with the norms for Local Authorities

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Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Comparison
	There is a great sense of collaboration in my team	Teamwork and collaboration	<div><div>75%</div><div>13%</div><div>12%</div></div>			-4
	Considering my duties and responsibilities, I think my pay is fair	Value and reward	<div><div>47%</div><div>22%</div><div>31%</div></div>			-3
	Where I work, different views, backgrounds and approaches are valued	Respect and dignity	<div><div>78%</div><div>13%</div><div>9%</div></div>			-1
	I have been having regular one to ones and seasonal conversations with my People Leader	Westminster Way	<div><div>71%</div><div>15%</div><div>14%</div></div>			-1
	In order to meet my objectives, I have the freedom to work in a way that is most productive	Westminster Way	<div><div>76%</div><div>11%</div><div>12%</div></div>			-1

Favourable Neutral Unfavourable



These 5 results are the strongest when compared with WCC 2020 Survey, 02 Oct 2020

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Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Vs Previous
	During the past 12 months have you personally experienced inappropriate behaviour at work?	Respect and dignity	<div><div>89%</div><div>11%</div></div>			<div><div>+7</div></div>
	The environment(s) I work in, be it working in an agile way or a council building/in the borough, enables me to do my job effectively	Westminster Way	<div><div>82%</div><div>11%</div><div>7%</div></div>			<div><div>+7</div></div>
	My People Leader gives me clear and honest feedback that helps me to improve my performance	Westminster Way	<div><div>73%</div><div>17%</div><div>11%</div></div>			<div><div>+3</div></div>
	Senior Leaders are sufficiently visible where I work	Senior Leaders	<div><div>61%</div><div>19%</div><div>20%</div></div>			<div><div>+2</div></div>
	Different teams work really well together	Westminster Way	<div><div>53%</div><div>28%</div><div>19%</div></div>			<div><div>+2</div></div>

Favourable Neutral Unfavourable

Weakest compared to history



These 5 results are the weakest (or least strong) when compared with WCC 2020 Survey, 02 Oct 2020

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Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Vs Previous
	I am able to make decisions that are best for residents and communities	The service we provide	54%	33%	13%	-10
	I am kept up to date about important changes along with the reasons for them, and what is happening across the Council	Senior Leaders	63%	21%	17%	-9
	I have the opportunity to improve our services by seeking and using feedback from users	The service we provide	57%	29%	14%	-9
	I think it is safe to speak up and challenge the way that things are done	Westminster Way	54%	22%	24%	-8
	I feel supported in my mental health and wellbeing	Your wellbeing	62%	21%	17%	-7

Favourable Neutral Unfavourable

What are our highest scoring questions?



These 5 items are the highest scoring in the survey

Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Comparison
	I am committed to helping the Council meet its goals and objectives	Engagement index (new)	92%	7%	1%	n/a
🎯	I care about the future of the Council	Engagement index (new)	89%	9%	2%	0
🎯	During the past 12 months have you personally experienced inappropriate behaviour at work?	Respect and dignity	89%		11%	n/a
	Working here makes me want to do the best work I can	Engagement index (new)	83%	13%	4%	+3
🎯	I believe the work I do will help us to deliver a city for all	My job and role	82%	13%	5%	n/a

● Favourable ● Neutral ● Unfavourable

What are our lowest scoring questions?



These 5 items are the lowest scoring in the survey

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Impact	Question	Theme	Response favourability			Comparison
	Did you report this?	Respect and dignity	<div><div>42%</div></div>	<div><div>58%</div></div>		n/a
	Changes that impact on me are well managed	When change happens	<div><div>44%</div></div>	<div><div>32%</div></div>	<div><div>24%</div></div>	<div><div>+4</div></div>
	I am optimistic about my opportunities for career development	Westminster Way	<div><div>46%</div></div>	<div><div>28%</div></div>	<div><div>26%</div></div>	<div><div>+5</div></div>
	It is easy to get things done in my service	My job and role	<div><div>47%</div></div>	<div><div>27%</div></div>	<div><div>26%</div></div>	n/a
	Considering my duties and responsibilities, I think my pay is fair	Value and reward	<div><div>47%</div></div>	<div><div>22%</div></div>	<div><div>31%</div></div>	<div><div>-3</div></div>

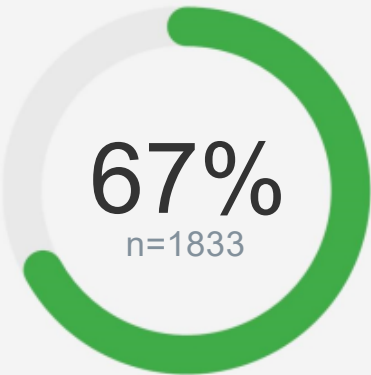
Favourable Neutral Unfavourable

How many people responded?



Response rate

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Taking action is key!

1833 people have responded to this survey, which is 67% of those invited to respond.

Visible action planning and continuous communication of how you are responding to the survey is vital in order to support and improve Engagement from this point forward.



Favourable



Neutral



Unfavourable

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Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 22nd March 2022

Classification: General Release

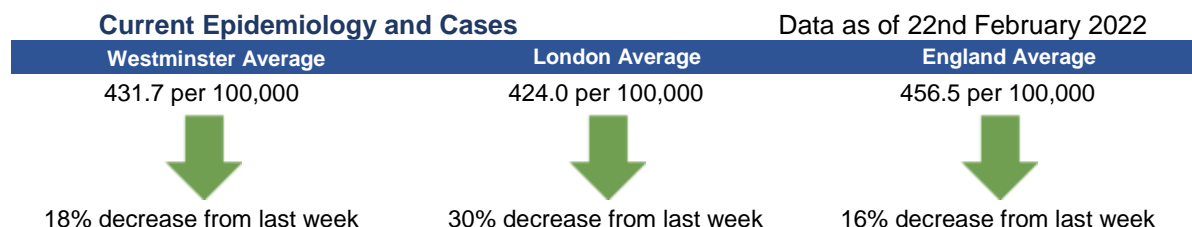
Title: Covid Update

Report of: Director of Public Health

Report Author and Contact Details: Anna Raleigh, Director of Public Health

1. COVID-19 Update

- 1.1 Case rates in the borough are down by 18% compared to last week, continuing the new downward trend seen across London. Westminster rates are above the London average, and the borough currently has the 5th highest case rate in London. Positivity rates are also decreasing with 7.7% of tests positive.
- 1.2 The latest data from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infection survey (testing everyone in the sample, regardless of whether they report they are experiencing symptoms) shows that: In London and England the percentage of people testing positive for coronavirus decreased in the week ending 18 February 2022. It is estimated that 1 in 20 people had covid.



- 1.3 On the 21 February, the Government published its [Living with Covid-19 plan](#). This plan - underpinned by vaccines - will remove the remaining legal domestic restrictions while continuing to protect people most vulnerable to COVID-19 and maintaining resilience. The Government's objective in the next phase of the COVID-19 response is to enable the country to manage COVID-19 like other respiratory illnesses, while minimising mortality and retaining the ability to respond if a new variant emerges with more dangerous properties than the Omicron variant, or during periods of waning immunity.
- 1.4 To meet this objective, the Government will structure its ongoing response around four principles:
 - a. **Living with COVID-19:** removing domestic restrictions while encouraging safer behaviours through public health advice, in common with longstanding ways of managing most other respiratory illnesses;
 - b. **Protecting people most vulnerable to COVID-19:** vaccination guided by Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) advice, and deploying targeted testing;
 - c. **Maintaining resilience:** ongoing surveillance, contingency planning and the ability to reintroduce key capabilities such as mass vaccination and testing in an emergency;

- d. **Securing innovations and opportunities** from the COVID-19 response, including investment in life sciences.

1.5 **From 24 February:**

- The legal requirement to self-isolate following a positive test is removed. Adults and children who test positive will continue to be advised to stay at home and avoid contact with other people.
- Fully vaccinated close contacts of positive COVID cases and those aged under 18 will no longer be asked to test daily for 7 days.
- It will no longer be a legal requirement for close contacts who are not fully vaccinated to self-isolate.
- Self-isolation support payments and national funding for practical support ends.
- Contact tracing will end, you will no longer be contacted by NHS Test and Trace to inform you if you were near someone who tested positive for COVID.
- The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) (No. 3) Regulations are revoked. Local authorities will continue to manage local outbreaks of COVID-19 in high risk settings as they do with other infectious diseases.

1.6 **From 24 March**, the COVID-19 provisions within Statutory Sick Pay and Employment and Support Allowance regulations will end. People with COVID-19 may still be eligible, subject to the normal conditions of entitlement.

1.7 **From 1 April**, the Government will update guidance setting out the ongoing steps that people with COVID-19 should take to minimise contact with other people. Additional steps include:

- Removing the current guidance on voluntary COVID-status certification in domestic settings and no longer recommend that certain venues use the NHS COVID Pass.
- No longer providing free universal symptomatic and asymptomatic testing for the general public in England.
- Removing the health and safety requirement for every employer to explicitly consider COVID-19 in their risk assessments.

1.8 The Government has signalled its intention to revoke the mandatory vaccination for both health and social care staff. Instead, the Government is likely to ask professional regulators such as the Care Quality Commission to review how the responsibility for vaccination could be strengthened through guidance.

1.9 Vaccination is still recommended as a professional responsibility for health and care staff, but is not likely to be a legal requirement going forward. However, until revoked the 2021 VCOD legislation remains in situ and anyone entering a Care Home as part of deployment (non-emergency business requirement to attend Care Homes) will be required to demonstrate that they are fully vaccinated.

2. **Supporting the CCG with the Rollout of COVID-19 Vaccinations**

2.1 Data from NHS England states that 55% of Westminster residents over the age of 12 have received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. 38% of borough residents have received their booster vaccination, bringing our total number of boosters delivered to residents to 103,000.

- 2.2 Vaccinations continue to be available through local clinics, pop ups, schools and pharmacies. The latest offer is summarised on the [Westminster City Council website](#).
- 2.3 Vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 who are deemed to be Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) went live from Monday 31st January 2022 and a wider offer of vaccinations for all 5 to 11 year olds will begin from April.
- 2.4 Public Health has been successful in receiving a sum of £485k from Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUCH) for a six-month Community Vaccine Programme scheme.

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Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date:	22 nd March 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Impact of Covid-19 on Council Finances
Report of:	Gerald Almeroth
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Finance and Smart City
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Medium Term Financial Planning
Report Author and Contact Details:	Gerald Almeroth galmeroth@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. In March 2020 the UK entered a national lockdown to stop of the spread of coronavirus. The Government advised people to work from home where possible, halted travel both domestically and internationally, and many businesses were forced close.
- 1.2. Over the last two years, the UK has come in and out of lockdowns and restrictions have been imposed when the virus has peaked. These restrictions have led to a significant reduction in commuter, tourist and leisure activities in Westminster.
- 1.3. The impact of this on the Council's finances three-fold:
 - Income from sales, fees and charges have reduced by £20m in comparison to pre-covid levels.
 - Expenditure of c£10m has been incurred to support the most vulnerable in our community and ensure the City is covid safe. This includes the implementation of social distancing measures.
 - A reduction in collection of Council Tax and Business Rates in comparison to pre-covid levels.

- 1.4. Councils lobbied the Government early on about the financial impact of the pandemic on local authorities. Government responded by providing councils with additional funding. Westminster has benefited from this. The Council's general reserve has only reduced by £3.8m since the pandemic.
- 1.5. Longer term the Council continues to face uncertainty. Visitor numbers are still recovering. Without the influx of pre-covid levels of daily commuters and visitors, income from sales, fees and charge might not get back to previous levels. This would present an on-going pressure on the Council's budget.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1. To note the impact of the pandemic on the Council's finances.

3. Covid-19 and Westminster Finances

- 3.1. The report summarises the Covid-19 impact on Council finances into four parts:

- Impact on income
- Impact on expenditure
- Funding received from the Government
- Debt management (particularly around council tax and business rates)

Income

- 3.2. The impact of covid-19 on the Council's income is outlined in the table below:

	A	B	C	D	E
	Pre-Covid Budget £m	2021/22 Budget £m	(Pre-Covid) 2019/20 Outturn £m	2020/21 Outturn £m	2021/22 Forecast £m
Sales, Fees & Charges					
Parking (all)	(87.7)	(84.8)	(86.7)	(66.5)	(84.2)
Commercial Waste	(18.2)	(13.7)	(18.7)	(7.7)	(12.9)
Road Management	(8.8)	(9.1)	(9.5)	(8.6)	(9.4)
Planning	(7.3)	(7.1)	(6.2)	(4.9)	(5.0)
Others Income Streams	(20.4)	(12.1)	(15.4)	(5.0)	(12.0)
Total Income from SFC	(142.4)	(126.8)	(136.5)	(92.6)	(123.6)

- 3.3. Income from sales, fees and charges (SFC) in 2020/21 was **£50m less than budgeted** (A less D). As a result, the Council reduced the 2021/22 SFC budget to £126.8m (B). The forecast for 2021/22 is £123.7m (E). Therefore, in comparison to the pre-covid budget **the forecast income for this year will be £20m less** (A less E).

Expenditure

3.4. In 2020/21 the Council had to spend approximately £10m more than budget in its response to the pandemic. Broadly this was related to the following areas:

- £1m for PPE
- £2m for short breaks, social care in Family Services and UASC care leavers.
- £1.5m supporting rough sleepers
- c£5m from undelivered savings

3.5. Forecast position for 2021/22 is additional expenditure of £0.5m (within Children's) specifically related to Covid-19. Furthermore, there are also undelivered/re-profiled savings for £5.5m.

Government Funding

3.6. Over the last two years, the Council have received c£39m of funding from Government to cover general covid expenditure and c£29 to cover income losses. This is summarised below:

Funding	2020/21 £m	2021/22 £m	Total £m
General Covid Grant	29.2	9.9	39.1
Sales, Fees and Charges Income Compensation Scheme	28.0	2.4	30.4
Total	57.2	12.3	69.5

3.7. Westminster have also received over £20m in specific grant funding to aid its response to Covid. This includes areas grants such as the Contain Management Outbreak Fund, Infection Control and Test and Trace.

3.8. The level of government funding has meant the Council have only needed to use £3.8m of its general reserve in 2020/21 and forecast to use a further £3.4m in 2021/22. Therefore, over the last two years the Council have only used just over 10% of reserves despite gross budget variances of a third.

Debt Management

3.9. Council Tax and Business Rates are the Council's two main areas of income collection. In both cases collections rates from dropped by 10% in comparison to pre-covid levels. This is after taking account of additional business rates relief.

Looking Ahead

- 3.10. The City of Westminster have always had a high day time population with large footfall in the West End and other central areas. This has enabled the Council to collect a large amount of income from Sales, Fees and Charges, particularly from parking, commercial waste, road management and planning. However, as businesses move towards hybrid working and tourism remains low this activity level could permanently reduce. In such a scenario the Council may struggle to achieve the same level of income as pre-covid years. This position will continue to be monitored as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Rikin Tailor

rtailor@westminster.gov.uk

POLICY AND SCRUTINY

at Westminster
City Council

Annual Report 2022



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Scrutiny Annual Report 2022



**Cllr Karen Scarborough
Commission Chair**

Foreword from the Chair of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Since the establishment of the scrutiny function under the legislation of the Local Government Act 2000, scrutiny has played and continues to play a vital role at Westminster City Council. It amplifies the voice of residents and enables Councillors to hold to account the decision-makers within the Council, such as the Cabinet, the Executive Leadership Team and Council officers.

But the remit of scrutiny reaches beyond the geographic footprint of Westminster, so that we also hold to account those decision-makers outside Westminster City Council, such as the Chief Executives and Directors of Health Trusts and Utilities, for example. Westminster scrutiny also contributes to the development and review of new policies. Through these processes, we often hear from residents and experts who contribute their own local knowledge in addition to national and international expertise and experience.

As we strive for World-Class Westminster, the Council's overarching strategic vision, "City for All", shapes so much of what we do at Westminster, and this is true for Westminster scrutiny. In scrutiny, we see how the local is the global, whether we are investigating the effects of climate change in severe flooding in north Westminster or the impact of a global pandemic on Oxford Street, our international high street, so our scrutiny function contributes to achieving this world-class vision. We work to ensure that decisions, policies, and services are developed and operated in a way that makes Westminster a place where people can grow, develop and thrive in a healthy and safe environment, build fantastic careers in both local businesses and world-leading industries, have access to high quality, affordable homes, and retire into their community with dignity and pride.

As we approach the local elections in May 2022, we can reflect that the last four years (2018 – 2022) have been busy but successful years for scrutiny at Westminster, despite the many challenges. Whilst success can be captured in resident feedback, improved council services and robust decision-making, it can be difficult to measure the impact of scrutiny, especially where that impact is the work of building constructive relationships or brokering conversations.

As an example of the breadth of scrutiny's work, in 2018 I myself chaired the Access to Culture Task Group. This began initially with the aim of making recommendations to help low-income families and improve social capital outcomes for our younger residents. Our investigations revealed the greater potential for streamlining access to all the Council's services, so the scope of this scrutiny task group work was ultimately widened and our recommendations reflected this, with a main

recommendation for a single card which harnessed the benefits of this streamlining. Our research and work demonstrated how such a card can be tailored with offers for each individual resident, and act as a proof of age card, eligibility for housing, library card, local retailer offers, loyalty discounts, recycling or Green rewards, collecting skills for inclusion in a CV, tailored mailings and surveys, a health card, blood group and donor card, use for Adult Social Care services, sports and leisure membership, indeed multiple memberships, with possible 'Westminster' branding, real time integrations and endless possibilities. The recommendations also included how the Council could improve access to the arts and culture for all Westminster's residents. These scrutiny recommendations originated and now underpin the work being done by the Council's Smart City team to deliver a MyWestminster Digital Card.

This annual report encompasses the period from January 2021 to March 2022, again demonstrating the breadth of topics and issues that scrutiny can consider and examine, to provide recommendations to improve services for our residents.

In future, as Westminster emerges from the tumultuous two years of the global pandemic, Westminster scrutiny will be more important than ever. COVID-19 has brought unprecedented challenges for our City, whether at local or international levels, for our residents, local business community and for the global-brand businesses and industries which also call Westminster their home. Responding to and recovering from the effects of COVID-19 will require innovation and new ideas. As members of Scrutiny at Westminster, we shall endeavour to ensure that the Council's recovery plans and policies are robust and in the best interests of our residents.

As Chair of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission, I should also like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow scrutiny colleagues and our scrutiny officers for their work in addition to their commitment to the independence and effectiveness of scrutiny at Westminster.

Councillor Karen Scarborough

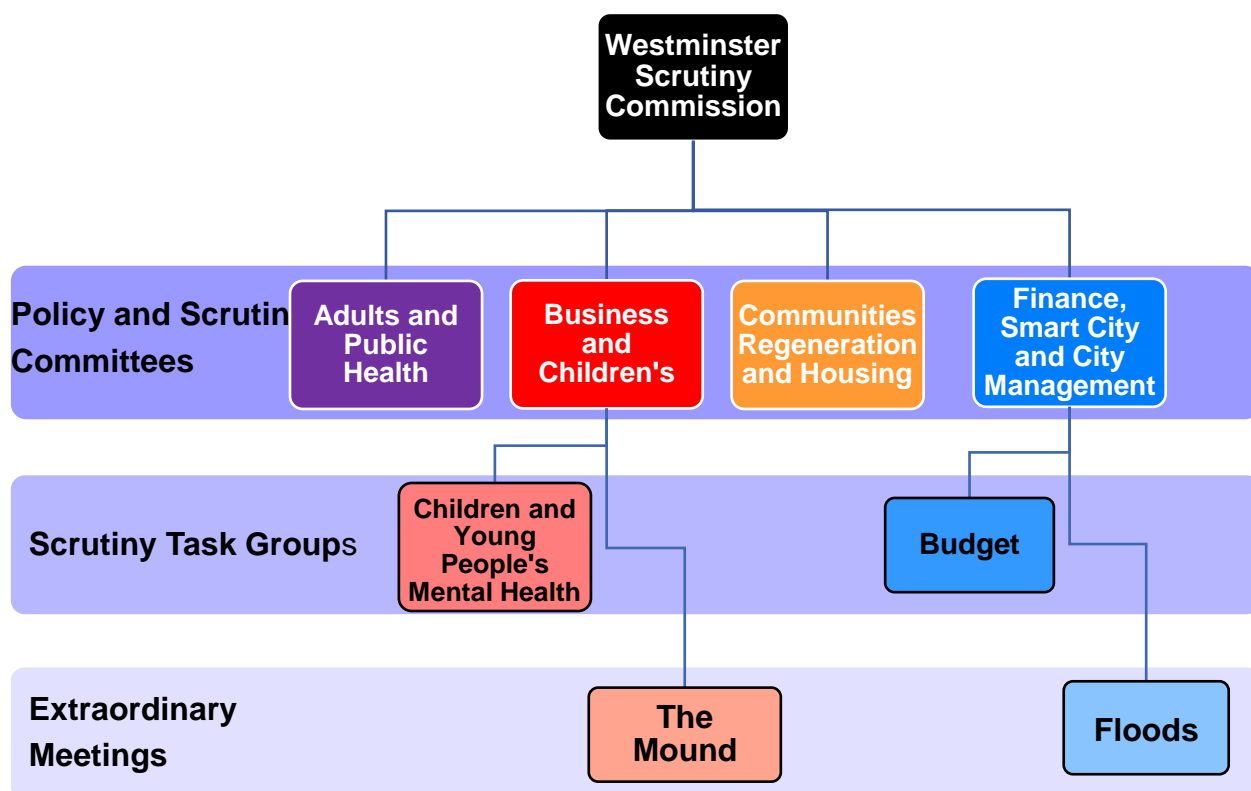
1. How does Scrutiny work at Westminster?

Scrutiny is vital in promoting transparency and local accountability as it allows Councillors (non-executive, backbench) to hold the Council's Cabinet Members (executive) to account. Scrutiny allows our residents to have a greater say in Council matters by scrutinising matters of local concern. This scrutiny leads to reports and recommendations which advise the Cabinet and the Council as a whole on its policies, budget and service delivery. Importantly, other external partners that provide services within the City, such as the NHS and the Metropolitan Police Service, also fall within the remit of our scrutiny committees, so the process acts as an important tool for our frontline Councillors to address the concerns and champion the interests of residents in relation to the public services they receive.

In Westminster, scrutiny is conducted by the overarching Westminster Scrutiny Commission and its four subordinate Policy and Scrutiny Committees (see **Figure 1**). These Policy and Scrutiny (P&S) Committees 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. By examining Westminster services against similar services elsewhere, regionally, nationally or internationally, the P&S Committees work to achieve benchmarking of and excellence in service delivery. They serve to shine a light on and bring transparency to the decisions taken by Cabinet Members and the way services are delivered. The issues which the P&S Committees choose to explore are evidence-based and will often include the insights of external experts and relevant community representatives or advocates. This approach ensures objective and supportive analysis of issues of concern or of plans in development to provide the Council with the reassurance that its policies are sound and that its services are meeting the needs of residents and businesses.

To achieve this, and to complete ambitious scrutiny work programmes, the Westminster Scrutiny Commission usually meets four times per municipal year, whilst the individual Policy and Scrutiny Committees each usually meet six times.

Figure 1: Westminster City Council Policy and Scrutiny Committee Structure and relevant task groups 2021-22



1.1 Beyond the Committee Meeting Cycle: Extraordinary Meetings, Task Groups, Single Member Studies

To inform policy development and examine specific issues in more depth, committees can interrogate issues in other ways beyond the cycle of scheduled committee meetings. Policy and Scrutiny Committees typically also establish Councillor-led task groups (TGs), which allow more time to investigate the issues in more depth. The work of a task group can take between four months and a year to complete, depending upon whether a rapid response or longer term investigations are required, and can be formed from a smaller sub-group of scrutiny members of one Policy and Scrutiny Committee, or across two or more committees. As part of this work, Councillors will often hear evidence from external expert witnesses, question key Council officers and Cabinet Members, consult with relevant stakeholders and conduct site visits. Alternatively, a P&S committee may hold an Extraordinary Meeting (EM) in order to bring all stakeholders together to better understand and evaluate a particular time-critical issue.

The findings of task groups and extraordinary meetings are reported back to the committee that originally commissioned the work and any recommendations are presented to the Cabinet Member who by statute must reply within two months, setting out any course of action that they intend to undertake.

An individual member can also examine an issue in detail on behalf of the sponsoring Policy and Scrutiny Committee, with support from the Westminster Scrutiny Team. This is called a Single Member Study (SMS). Like task group work, the SMS work allows investigation over a longer period of time beyond the confines of a single committee meeting and is often undertaken by a member with a particular interest in a topic.

Over the last year, the Policy and Scrutiny Committees commissioned two task groups and held two extraordinary meetings (Fig 1). A summary of each, together with its key findings and recommendations, is set out in section relevant to the commissioning Committee as follows:

- Finance, Smart City & City Management: Budget Task Group (annual);
Floods (EM);
- Business and Children: Children and Young People's
Mental Health (TG); and
Marble Arch Mound project (EM)

1.2 Committee Work Programmes

Work programmes set the agenda for the regular meetings of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees. The work programmes are determined by the P&S Committee chair and their committee, with overall oversight and determination of the work programmes for all of the committees resting with the Westminster Scrutiny Commission. Work programmes are typically developed at the start of the municipal year and reflect a combination of:

- issues affecting residents of which members are aware;
- topical issues which have an impact on Westminster;
- the policy development programme of the Council; or
- reviews requested by Council directorates where they are seeking an internal but objective evaluation of a service.

The work programme is flexible to allow for urgent or unexpected issues to be considered as the municipal year progresses.

To find out more about each Policy and Scrutiny Committee and its work over the course of the year, please refer to the sections below and also visit the webpages for the relevant committee to find upcoming meeting dates and agenda.

1.3 Suggestions for Scrutiny Topics

Westminster scrutiny also encourages residents to suggest items for the scrutiny work programme. If you have a suggestion for a topic that you think could benefit from being scrutinised, please contact scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk. For a topic to be considered, it must affect a large proportion of the Westminster population or

adversely affect a particular Westminster community of association¹, interest² or place³. Please point to any evidence in support of your concerns. Whilst you can submit a proposal anonymously, it would help if a member of the scrutiny team can contact you to understand your concerns and to identify the most appropriate Policy and Scrutiny Committee for the submission of your topic suggestion.

1.4 Attending Policy and Scrutiny Committee meetings

Members of the public and press are welcome to attend Policy and Scrutiny Committee meetings. These are usually held in Westminster City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1E 6QP, on the 18th Floor, unless otherwise stated. Since 2020 and the legislation concerning local government meetings necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, our P&S Committee meetings are also live-streamed and accessible virtually. However, Task Group meetings are open to attendance by the public only at the discretion of the Chairman of the task group in question.

If you would like to attend a Policy and Scrutiny Committee meeting, or should you have any other questions, please feel free to contact the Westminster Scrutiny Team at scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk.

¹ Such as people from Greece or deaf people

² Such as those that are members of tennis clubs or voluntary organisations

³ People living in a locality such as a ward

2. Summaries of the work of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees

2.1 Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Members:



Chair

Karen Scarborough



Iain Bott



Jim Glen



Adam Hug



Gotz Mohindra



Tim Roca

What does the Westminster Scrutiny Commission do?

The Westminster Scrutiny Commission (the Commission) is the overarching scrutiny body which is responsible for the management and co-ordination of Westminster City Council's Policy and Scrutiny function. As mentioned, the Commission exercises overall responsibility for the scrutiny work programme. Currently, the members of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission are the Chairmen of the respective Policy and Scrutiny Committees, alongside two minority party representatives.

The Commission is responsible for the work programmes of all the Policy and Scrutiny Committees and has responsibility for scrutinising a number of corporate, cross-organisation operations of the Council including:

- ❖ strategy and communications;
- ❖ central government relations activity;
- ❖ the Council's Emergency Preparedness planning;
- ❖ growth;
- ❖ performance;
- ❖ Climate Emergency;
- ❖ equalities; and
- ❖ the Council's Pay Policy.

The Westminster Scrutiny Commission is also responsible for scrutiny of Westminster City Council's Leader, Cllr Rachael Robathan, and the Chief Executive, Stuart Love.

2.1.1 Regular updates

In the current municipal year, since May 2021, the Westminster Scrutiny Commission met three times. Members received updates from the Leader of the Council on matters within her portfolio and from the Chief Executive on matters of corporate interest.

The Leader's updates have included topics such as: the Afghan refugee resettlement scheme; the al fresco dining schemes which were in place between April and 30 September 2021; the Council's consultation and engagement processes; virtual and hybrid meetings in the COVID-19 context; and the implications of the Budget and Tax Day for Westminster City Council.

The Chief Executive's updates have previously covered corporate wide issues such as: Westminster Connects; working with NHS partners on vaccine roll-out; the work of the Council's Economy and Public Health teams to support residents in a return to employment; and support for rough sleepers.

The Commission reviewed reports on the following issues:

- the Council's corporate strategy, [City for All](#);
- COVID-19 and vaccination programmes in Westminster;
- the Council's Emergency Preparedness planning;
- Climate Emergency;
- the impact of COVID-19 on the Council's finances;
- the 2021 Staff Survey

2.2 Adults and Public Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Members



Chair
Iain Bott



Margot Bright



Ruth Bush



Nafsika Butler-Thalassis



Maggie Carman



Danny Chalkley



Angela Harvey



Selina Short

What does the committee do?

The committee examines work that falls under the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health (currently Cllr Tim Mitchell).

Key programmes and areas of policy that the committee looks at are: Adult Social Care safeguarding; Adult Social Care support for vulnerable adults; Public Health Services; Adult Social Care commissioning; Adult Social Care provided services and Health Partnerships.

2.2.1 Highlights from the year

i. Obesity in Westminster

The Committee received a report summarising the Council's obesity strategy and how it plans to reduce obesity rates across the City.

The Committee reflected that tackling obesity was complex and multifaceted. Senior Officers were of the view that the Council needed to change its approach to tackling obesity and that a whole-systems approach is required, with multi-agency working across the Clinical Commissioning Group and Northwest London.

The key themes that emerged from the Committee's discussions were:

- joint working between Council directorates. Officers provided an example of effective cross-council working, such as ensuring streets are well-lit so that residents feel safer to be active and walk around the City;
- the Council's physical health offer and the range of activities available for young people that do not like competitive sports;
- the importance of educating residents about nutritional, healthy diets and also providing them with cooking skills; and
- the importance of a whole-family approach

The Committee concluded that this topic was worthy of deeper investigation and instructed Scrutiny Officers to begin scoping work on a Task Group investigating obesity and metabolic diseases amongst children and adults in Westminster.

ii. Public Health Funerals

The Committee received a [report](#) summarising the Council's public health funerals procedure. These are funerals arranged by the Council where the person is a resident who does not appear to have the means to afford a funeral or may have arrived within the jurisdiction of Westminster through tragic circumstances. It was noted that this was the first time that public health funerals had ever been scrutinised by a Policy and Scrutiny Committee. The Committee had also noted that public health funeral arrangements would be tendered for re-procurement in 2022, and reflected on the contents of a recently published [Quaker Social Action report](#) about the accessibility of public health funerals.

The Committee heard from a variety of witnesses which included Westminster City Council officers, a local firm of funeral directors, as well as the London Borough of Brent officer who manages public health funerals in Brent.

The key themes that emerged from the Committee discussions were:

- the referral rates for public health funerals during and post the COVID-19 lockdowns;
- whether the term, “public health funeral” was appropriate or if other terms would be more accessible to the public;
- the recovered costs from public health funerals and how the service forecasts its budget;
- whether cremations and burials took place according to the known wishes and practices of the deceased; and
- the Council’s communication to its residents about this service.

The Committee also discussed and praised the resilience of council officers working on this issue and discussed how Westminster City Council could improve awareness of public health funerals service amongst members and residents. Committee members noted that, whilst the service was included on the People First website which advises on independent living, this was not easy to find and recommended that it should also be included on the Council’s main website, to be more easily accessible.

The Committee proposed to further scrutinise public health funerals when more data had been received from the service. The aim would be to support the re-procurement of the contract in 2022.

iii. The temporary closure of in-patient wards at the Gordon Hospital

The Committee had requested that regular update reports on the Gordon Hospital become a standing item on its agenda and so receives updates from Central North-West London (CHWL) on the temporary but continuing closure, without consultation, of the in-patient wards at the Gordon Hospital. Committee members also conducted a site visit to the Gordon Hospital and St Charles Hospital mental health facilities in June 2021. The Committee expressed its deep dissatisfaction with the situation and sought the early re-opening of the wards. The Committee asked questions of CNWL on the following:

- the extent to which Westminster’s residents had felt the impact of the loss of the wards in Westminster’s only in-patient facility, the Gordon Hospital;
- the use of in-patient facilities outside of CNWL (“out of area placements”);
- the length of stay of patients;
- post-discharge community care for vulnerable residents and where concerned neighbours should go to help; and
- the pressures on the St Charles Hospital and the impacts on RBKC residents as a result of the closure of the Gordon Hospital.

Scrutiny Officers arranged a roundtable for P&S Committee Members and the Chief Executive of CNWL to discuss the Gordon Hospital in greater detail in October 2021.

2.2.2 Regular Updates

During the year, the Committee received regular updates from the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, from Healthwatch as well as reports/updates on the following:

- update from NHS North-West London Integrated Care System on elective surgery;
- update on the impacts of COVID-19;
- Mental Health provision in Westminster;
- COVID-19 vaccination programme update;
- Safeguarding Adults Executive Board Annual Report;
- Oral Health;
- the Council's Autism Strategy;
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments; and
- vaccine uptake in the City of Westminster.

2.3 Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Members



Chair

Karen Scarborough



Geoff Barraclough Christabel Flight Lindsey Hall Aicha Less Eoghain Murphy



Tim Roca



Mark Shearer

CO-OPTED MEMBERS:

Alix Ascough Wasim Butt
Marina Coleman Mark Hewitt
Ryan Nichol

What does the committee do?

The committee examines work that falls under the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning and the Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning.

Key programmes and areas of policy that this committee looks at are: Business Support and Economic Development; Employment; the Council's Licensing Policy and Service; Town Planning; Planning Policy; Place-Shaping; the Westminster Adult Education Service; the Oxford Street District programme; Children's Social Care and safeguarding; Commissioning for Children and Young People; Schools; Libraries and Registrars; and Science, Technology, (Arts) and Mathematics (STEAM), internships, and City Lions.

The committee's remit also includes the statutory scrutiny of education programmes and policies. Given this, the committee membership also includes co-opted representatives from the following:

- Church of England Diocese;
- Roman Catholic Diocese;
- Parent Governors; and
- Headteachers from local schools or academies.

2.3.1 Highlights from the year

i. Health and Safety in Schools

The Committee received a report on the Council's internal audit of health and safety policies in schools. This matter was referred to this Committee by the Audit and Performance Committee to understand whether Westminster City Council needed more strategic oversight of health and safety procedures across all schools in Westminster. The Committee heard about the five-year audit cycles and how the Internal Audit team had undertaken thematic work in the interim period. This had led to the examination of school health and safety policies during the lockdown period.

The key themes that emerged from the Committee's discussions were:

- the Council's legal responsibility which extended only to community schools. The Committee was advised that the Council had limited powers and oversight over health and safety policies across all schools in the City;
- the Council's provision of health and safety guidance to all schools on the re-opening of school premises after the Covid-19 lockdowns; and
- the use of the 'EVOLVE system' for all schools. The Committee heard that this system allowed all schools to upload risk assessments.

The Committee noted the report and welcomed the use of the EVOLVE system in order to share templates and guidance amongst schools.

ii. The School Inclusion Pilot

The Committee received a report on the School Inclusion Pilot, run by the Early Help team in Westminster. This programme works with vulnerable children and their families with the aim of reducing school exclusions.

Aaron Sumner (Headteacher, Hallfield Primary) and Rachel Kelly (Deputy Head, St Augustine's High School) also attended to give their views on how the programme has helped their schools. The Committee heard how the pilot shaped a "whole school" philosophy in supporting children and had assisted in a more proactive approach to supporting children at risk of exclusion and their families.

The key themes that emerged from the Committee discussions were:

- the programme's focus, which encourages schools to adopt a trauma-informed approach to setting attendance and behaviour policies;
- the programme's operation which includes work with children **and** with their families as well. This aspect of the programme was warmly welcomed by the teachers present at the Committee's meeting;
- the importance of learning about trauma and the positive impact that this learning has had in supporting children throughout the pandemic; and
- the pilot's success in engaging with families and lowering the rates of informal exclusions amongst children they are working with. The Committee heard that this success has led to this programme becoming permanent.

iii. School Uniforms

The Committee received a report from the Council's School Standards team on how it intends to work with Westminster schools to lower the cost of school uniforms, following new guidance issued to schools (Education (Guidance about the Costs of School Uniforms) Act 2021). This followed a [report](#) by The Children's Society in 2020 looking at the cost of school uniforms as a barrier to education.

The Committee heard that the Council would provide signposting to families who required additional support, which could also include translation services, where needed. Further suggestions included Council liaison with neighbouring boroughs to investigate alternative schemes and potential for Parent/Teacher Associations (PTAs) and other associations to collaborate on providing second-hand items. The Committee requested that the inclusion of footwear in calculating the average Westminster uniform spend should also be investigated by the School Standards Team.

2.3.2 Task Groups and Extraordinary Meetings

i. Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Group

Recognising that pressures on the mental well-being of Westminster's children and adolescents were more acute than for previous generations, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Group (CYPMH) was established in May 2021 to begin an inquiry into local, regional and national contexts and how to prepare young people and mitigate for the effects on mental health, with emphasis on the Covid-19 context. This came about because the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee decided to investigate the impacts of the global pandemic on the mental health of Westminster's youngest residents in a joint task group with the Adults and Public Health P&S Committee. The COVID-19 pandemic brought existing health inequalities in the UK to the forefront and this was the case in Westminster too, with the pandemic's impacts accelerating the levels of mental health issues amongst our residents, particularly our vulnerable and younger residents.

However, as the CYPMH Task Group has discovered, whilst the COVID-19 pandemic brought challenges and increased need for mental health services, it has also brought together local partners with a renewed sense of urgency and ambition to tackle this growing crisis. This shared determination came through strongly throughout the task group inquiry's evidence sessions, where CYPMH Task Group members heard from NHS service providers; the voluntary sector; Council Officers in Sport, Leisure and Active Communities Service, Children's Services and Public Health; the UK Mental Health Ambassador (Department for Education); and schools as well as from young people via Young Healthwatch and Westminster Youth Council.

The Task Group was able to see how the Council's programme of work with local partners was able to provide support for the mental health and well-being of Westminster's children and young people, despite constraints and challenges. The investigations showed how Westminster City Council's Early Help offer, which is considered exemplary, provides an array of innovative targeted and universal support available to children and young people across Westminster. Members heard that, where there are any gaps in provision, the Council has made significant progress in addressing them, and is working to develop a truly comprehensive offer.

In common with every other local authority across the country, the CYPMH Task Group heard how Westminster's early intervention services could be expanded if additional funding were made available and, whilst costs rise each year, funding does not necessarily rise proportionately. Whilst the Council runs several services in tandem with local partners to boost the early intervention mental health offer, these are predominantly pilot or smaller-scale programmes. The Task Group is aware of the potential savings for other services, including education settings, NHS crisis care, and the criminal justice system, as well as improved outcomes for individual children, young people,

and families, and discussed how these improved outcomes warrant increased strategies for investment.

The CYPMH Task Group is finalising its report and recommendations for publication in Spring 2022. These recommendations include adopting a whole Council strategy, whole community approach towards supporting and improving the mental well-being of Westminster's youngest residents. From its investigations and reflected in its recommendations, the CYPMH Task Group considered that Westminster's Children's Services alone cannot shoulder the burden of the Council's approach to the mental health needs amongst Westminster's children and adolescents.

The Task Group's investigatory work acknowledges that, whilst the local authority has a central role to play in co-ordinating local partners, community services, schools and the NHS all play equal roles in supporting families to provide healthy and happy childhoods for Westminster's children. Through recommendations about improving the awareness of all services and their referral pathways, with targeted communications campaigns aimed at young people at risk of developing mental health issues, we can make these services more accessible and less daunting to our children and young people. The Task Group also recognises that its work may not yet be complete, as the consequences and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental well-being of children and young people will continue to be felt for years to come.

ii. The Mound Arch Mound project - Extraordinary Meeting

As part of the Council's £150 million Oxford Street District (OSD) programme, and as an attraction to the City in the context of the pandemic, the Council had undertaken the Marble Arch Mound project, which involved construction of a viewing platform experience at Marble Arch in the West End. Whilst visitor numbers to the Marble Arch Mound reached approximately 250,000, the attraction experienced setbacks and there was corporate learning needed as the project's costs exceeded £6.558 million. At an extraordinary meeting in October 2021, the Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee scrutinised the Marble Arch Mound project. The Committee received Westminster City Council's Internal Review Report in public and closed sessions, with the Chief Executive, Stuart Love, providing context. Stuart Love explained that the project was conceived during COVID-19 and he also referred to the pandemic's impact on the City, though he acknowledged that this did not excuse the mismanagement of the project, errors and the hiding of costs. Stuart Love emphasised that this was not done for personal gain by the officers concerned and that the consequences had been devastating for them.

The Committee asked a number of questions, including questions concerning recruitment processes and due diligence, project management and reporting, the parameters of the Council's Internal Review, the Council's corporate culture, the use of the Highways budget, governance, management of risk; and the Council's Member/Officer protocol.

Following deliberations, the Committee made the following seven recommendations:

- a. Enhance the oversight arrangements for high profile projects involving complexity, risk and innovation to minimise the risks identified in this report (i.e. significant project-overspend, circumvention of existing governance processes and lack of robust project management);
- b. Strengthen the terms of reference to the Capital Review Group and introduce a new commercial project assurance gateway. Ensure a reporting function/regular, formal reports;
- c. Explore and recommend options for senior level resourcing (Director and above) to ensure appropriate capacity, expertise and capability and encourage diversity of thought;
- d. The Standards Committee to prioritise the review of the Member/Officer Protocol;
- e. Undertake an audit of the Council's Highways contract management function in order to ensure that the contract management issues identified by the Westminster City Council Internal Review are not repeated;
- f. Recruitment decisions for temporary / fixed term appointments over £100,000 to go to a panel of relevant members, officers and (as necessary) independent experts for review to determine that appropriate skills and competencies are covered. Final review by a member panel; and
- g. Review of the resourcing of P&S Committees, with training to be provided for scrutiny chairmen, scrutiny members and officers.

The Committee received an update from the Chief Executive at its meeting in February 2022: implementation of the recommendations is in progress.

2.3.3 Regular Updates

During the year, this Committee received a standing verbal update of any urgent safeguarding issues: none were received. Members also received regular updates from the Cabinet Members for Business, Licensing and Planning and for Young People and Learning.

Reports

In addition to the highlighted reports listed above, the Committee received and discussed the following reports

- Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report;
- The Council's Gambling Policy;
- Oxford Street District Regeneration Project;
- School Performance;
- School Uniforms; and
- Westminster Investment Service.

2.4 Communities, Regeneration & Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Members



Chair

Jim Glen⁴



Barbara Arzymanow



Liza Begum



Antonia Cox



Elizabeth Hitchcock



Matt Noble



Ian Rowley



Hamza Taouzzale

What does the committee do?

This P&S Committee examines work which falls within the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Housing (currently Cllrs Heather Acton and David Harvey respectively).

The Committee looks at the following key programmes and areas of policy: Housing Services, including allocations; Housing Revenue Account; Temporary Accommodation and Rough Sleeping (housing-based services); Regeneration; Voluntary and Community Sector relations and support; Westminster Connects; Ward Budgets; Community Engagement and Inclusion; Police liaison; Community Protection services; Integrated Gangs Unit; Air Quality; and Rough Sleeping (street-based services).

2.4.1 Reports

During the year, Members received regular updates from the Cabinet Members for Housing and for Communities and Regeneration. Members also requested reports or updates and discussed the following:

- Report of the Metropolitan Police Service;
- Ward Budget Programme;
- Nuisance noisy vehicles, car meets and the use of Public Spaces Protection Orders;

⁴ Cllr Jim Glen joined scrutiny in October 2021 when he became the Chair of this P&S Committee. Prior to this, the Chair was Cllr Andrew Smith, who stepped down in October 2021 to become the Lord Mayor.

- Air Quality;
- Capital Works Programme;
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document;
- Rough Sleeping Strategy; and
- Challenging Futures Strategy

2.5 Finance, Smart City & City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Members



Chair

Gotz Mohindra



Ian Adams



Lorraine Dean



Paul Dimoldenberg



Adam Hug



Pancho Lewis



Eoghain Murphy



Emily Payne

What does the committee do?

The committee examines work that falls under the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City, and the Cabinet Member for City Management (currently Cllrs Paul Swaddle and James Spencer respectively). The committee also has a role in holding to account a number of external organisations such as the Metropolitan Police Service, Park Authorities, and Transport for London.

The committee looks at the following key programmes and areas of policy: Waste and Street Cleansing; Highways; Parking; Leisure; Parks and Open Spaces; Mortuaries and Cemeteries; Capital Programme; Procurement; Smart City programme/Digital Innovation; Digital Offer and Website; Broadband; Customer Services; Legal; Culture, Tourism, Public Art and City of Sculpture.

2.5.1 Highlights from the year

i. Report on the Oxford Street District programme

In May 2021 the Committee received a report on the Oxford Street District programme. The Committee discussed the balance between the need for detail to enable scrutiny and receiving papers of reasonable brevity. The Committee also discussed the benchmarks used, such as the City of Barcelona.

The key themes that emerged from the Committee's discussion were:

- the greening of the area, including tree-planting;
- the future of work and retail;
- zero carbon aims; and
- the importance of working with BIDs, landowners, businesses and amenity societies.

The Committee acknowledged the work involved in delivering the plan and requested to be kept informed at a future meeting.

ii. Procurement Strategy

The Committee received a written report and presentation on the Council's new procurement strategy. The Committee reflected that the Council spends over £500 million on third party services and discussed the quality and quantitative objectives by which the procurement strategy is evaluated. Other issues discussed included:

- how procurement contracts are reviewed, and lessons are learnt;
- how the Council uses procurement contracts to promote diversity and inclusion;
- the experiences of small businesses when tendering for Council contracts;
- how the Council can more widely advertise its tenders;
- the Preston Model – a procurement model that focuses on community wealth building; and
- competitive tendering.

The Committee welcomed the development of the Council's responsible procurement strategy and asked for an annual report on its implementation that would include contract reviews and lessons learnt reports.

2.5.2 Task groups and Extraordinary Meetings

i. Budget Task Group

At Westminster, a task group is used to scrutinise the Council's budget and so forms a standing task group under the auspices of the P&S Committee with the remit of scrutinising the finance portfolio. For 2021/2022, the Budget Task

Group met on three occasions in January 2022. In their deliberations, the Task Group members sought assurances from officers on several points including:

- managing the impact of changing service demand priorities;
- the deliverability of several projects; and
- how external economic factors will continue to put pressure on the Council's finances.

There were also a number of risks that the Budget Task Group highlighted and challenged during the meetings, namely:

- how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect the local and national economy. The Government's support over the pandemic will continue to have a long-term impact on public finances. This is being seen in rising inflation and interest rates. Members noted that these factors would present continuing future challenges for the Council's finances;
- that uncertainty around income streams, like that from parking, commercial waste and advertising sites, presents an ongoing risk and they also noted the Council's budgetary estimates for economic recovery;
- the sizeable impact that the delayed Fair Funding Review will have on Westminster; and
- that reprofiled savings were largely because of the continuing impact of COVID-19 but that it is important that they are achieved alongside new savings in order to maintain strong financial control ahead of the Fair Funding Review.

The Task Group members were reassured by the strong record of budgetary control in Westminster and recognised that the Council's reserve policy had served to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on council finances. Furthermore, they noted that the 2022/23 budget had flexibility built into it which will mitigate against continued uncertainty around COVID-19 and the local and national economy.

ii, Extraordinary Meeting: Flooding

In July 2021, extreme weather resulted in flood warnings for various parts of the UK. On 12 July 2021, a month's rainfall fell in just one hour, whilst parts of London on 25 July saw up to two months of rainfall across three to four hours. Given that figures have been published by the London mayor's office showing that 200,000 homes and workplaces, as well as 25% of rail stations in the capital and 10% of the network, a fifth of London schools, are all at high risk of flooding if extreme temperatures and flooding get worse, the scrutiny function understood that there were lessons to be taken from the events in Westminster in July. The Committee held an Extraordinary Meeting on 30 September 2021 at Porchester Hall, regarding the July flooding incidents.

The meeting venue of Porchester Hall was chosen as this had been the reception point for residents affected by the floods on the night of 12 July 2021.

The Committee welcomed witnesses from Westminster City Council's Environment and City Management Directorate, Thames Water, the London Fire Brigade, the Environment Agency, and the Metropolitan Police Service. The Committee had also decided to hear deputations from one Ward Councillor from wards affected by the flooding events of July 2021 as well as directly canvassing questions from residents and organisations (such as local housing associations) via the scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk address.

Matters raised by the nominated ward councillors included:

- the trauma and loss of property experienced by flooded residents
- the failure of authorities to offer adequate support to victims
- existing flood prevention measures and their inadequacy
- financial ramifications for residents and issues with insurance
- investigation and investment in measures to prevent future flooding.

The Committee also considered the following reports:

- **Westminster City Council Interim Section 19 Report:** The Committee received a written update from Westminster City Council's Environment and City Management Directorate.
- **Thames Water Interim Briefing Report:** The Committee received a written update from Thames Water concerning the flooding incidents of July 2021 in the City of Westminster. The Committee heard that the full report of the independent review commissioned by Thames Water into the July floods would be completed in early 2022. The Committee requested the report be shared with its members when completed.
- **London Fire Brigade Briefing Report:** The Committee received a written update from the London Fire Brigade about 12 July 2021.

The Committee's lines of questioning included:

- the causes of the floods and the reasons that water exceeded the drainage system's capacity;
- the failure of existing flood prevention schemes and measures;
- the inadequate response and poor communication from Thames Water to affected customers;
- the frequency of similar flooding events across London;
- climate change and the unpredictability of weather changes;
- the likelihood of future flooding events at a scale equal to or greater than those seen in July;
- steps that can be taken to future-proof homes and businesses;
- affected residents' insurance claims and the saleability of their homes; and
- the suitability of the current drainage and sewage systems and the possibility of a major overhaul.

The Committee agreed that reports on the flood response should be considered again by the Committee once the independent review commissioned by Thames Water had been completed, which was scheduled for 2022. The Committee also proposed a task group that would work to identify what the Council and its partners could do to further help protect communities from flooding events.

2.5.3 Regular updates and Reports

During the year, Members received regular updates from the Cabinet Members for Finance and Smart City and for City Management. They also requested reports on and discussed the following:

- resident focus and inclusivity in Smart City;
- the Transport for London E-Scooter Trial;
- the update of the Westminster City Council website; and
- proposals for Members' IT in the next electoral cycle.

3. Acknowledgements and Further Information

The Policy and Scrutiny Committee Chairmen consider that scrutiny is an independent yet collaborative process, the success of which depends on the involvement of many individuals and organisations, too numerous to list here. The Committee Chairmen therefore wish to acknowledge and thank the following:

- all the councillors involved in the scrutiny function at Westminster, who form the membership of Westminster's Policy and Scrutiny Committees;
- those members who also join the various scrutiny Task Groups and devote additional time to their scrutiny work;
- the Cabinet Members for their continuing support and openness to scrutiny recommendations;
- the independent external expert witnesses, who generously give their time and expertise to improve Westminster services for our residents;
- the Westminster officers who prepare and present the reports; and
- the Westminster Policy and Scrutiny Team for their support over the last four years.

If you would like more information about how scrutiny works at Westminster or if you wish to make a suggestion about areas for scrutiny by one of the committees, **please contact us** at scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk.

You can also view our previous scrutiny reports and the Westminster scrutiny pages on our website at www.westminster.gov.uk/policy-and-scrutiny.

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WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Action Tracker 2021/2022

ROUND ONE 21 JUNE 2021		
Agenda Item	Action	Update
Item 5: City for All Strategy	Strategy and Intelligence team to produce a non-technical briefing note on the data and intelligence used for analysing inequalities and how they are used (e.g. to contribute to CfA) (PW)	Completed – briefing dated 9 July 2021
Item 5: City for All Strategy	Overall strategy and evaluation of CfA to be covered at WSC CfA pillars to be covered individually at P&S committees	In progress
Item 5: City for All Strategy	Discussion of approach to involving WSC in future City for All strategy cycles (SL/PW)	In progress
Item 5: City for All Strategy	Update on the CfA evaluation framework	Completed – update at meeting on 22.11.21
Item 6: Work Programme	Reminder of dates	Completed in scrutiny members' update (October 2021)
Item 6: Work Programme	Covid19 updates to become a standing item	Completed – update at meeting on 22.11.21

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