



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date: **Tuesday 29th March, 2022**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue:

Members:

Councillors:

Ian Adams	Pancho Lewis
Lorraine Dean	Gotz Mohindra (Chairman)
Paul Dimoldenberg	Eoghain Murphy
Adam Hug	Emily Payne



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, .

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. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST¹

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 from the meeting held on 24 November 2021.

(Pages 5 - 12)

4. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE FOR FINANCE AND SMART CITY

To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City, Councillor Paul Swaddle OBE, on current and forthcoming issues in his portfolio, and to answer questions from Members.

(Pages 13 - 22)

5. CABINET MEMBER UPDATE FOR CITY MANAGEMENT

To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for City Management, Councillor James Spencer, on current and forthcoming issues in his portfolio, and to answer questions from Members.

(Pages 23 - 28)

6. UPDATE ON MEMBERS IT PROVISION

To receive feedback following members' responses to proposals and options regarding Members' IT arrangements, set out in a recent report and learn of plans moving forward.

(Pages 29 - 34)

¹ With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions, they should contact the Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison in advance of the meeting please

7. WCC WEBSITE: IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME GOING FORWARD

(Pages 35 - 50)

To learn of and comment on the WCC Website upgrade in 2020 and the consequent programme of improvement which includes:

- Phased improvement to Directorate webpages;
- Customer personalisation; and
- Improvement to online reporting tools, forms etc

8. WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages 51 - 56)

To consider the outstanding items on the Committee's Work Programme for recommendation to be included in the 2022-2023 programme.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To review any other business considered urgent by the Chairman.

Stuart Love
Chief Executive
18 March 2022

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

**FINANCE, SMART CITY AND CITY MANAGEMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
24th November 2021
MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

Minutes of a hybrid meeting of the **Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held virtually on 24th November 2021 at 6.30pm via Microsoft Teams and Rooms 18.01-03, 18th floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Gotz Mohindra (Chairman), Ian Adams, Lorraine Dean, Paul Dimoldenberg, Adam Hug, Matt Noble, Eoghain Murphy and Emily Payne.

Also Present: Councillor James Spencer (Cabinet Member), Councillor Paul Swaddle (Cabinet Member), Lewis Aaltonen (Policy and Scrutiny Co-ordinator), Gerald Almeroth (Executive Director for Finance and Resources), Elizabeth Gaden (E-Scooter Trial Stakeholder & Contracts Manager at Transport for London), Raj Mistry (Executive Director for Environment and City Management), Jonathan Rowing (Head of Parking Operations), Hannah Small (Policy and Scrutiny Co-ordinator) and Giacomo Vecia (Senior Strategic Transport Officer at City of London Corporation).

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 Councillor Pancho Lewis was unable to attend and sent apologies. Councillor Matt Noble substituted for Councillor Pancho Lewis.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 None received.

3. MINUTES

3.1 The Chairman approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19th October 2021.

3.2 The Chairman approved the minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on 30th September 2021.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND SMART CITY UPDATE

- 4.1 The Committee received a written and short verbal update from Councillor Paul Swaddle (Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City) who provided an update on current and forthcoming priorities in his portfolio.
- 4.2 The Committee discussed the following topics in detail:
- The Council's budget and the funding gap;
 - The timeframe for income budget's to return to pre-pandemic levels;
 - The public affairs strategy for further local government funding;
 - The Council's financial reserves;
 - Forecast variances and the identification of risk and opportunities within the variances;
 - Active Westminster Card and available discounts for residents;
 - An ongoing innovation competition on how the Council can better use data; and
 - The KPI for council and business tax collection rates
- 4.3 The Committee asked the Cabinet Member extensively about the Council's budget and the funding gap. Senior Officers updated that they are examining each service to see if any there would be any underspend within the budgets.
- 4.4 Concerning the timeframe for income budgets to return to pre-pandemic levels, the Committee were informed that return of revenue varied by service and might take the entirety of the next financial year to return to pre-pandemic levels. For example, some income streams such as parking was at 90% of pre-pandemic revenue. Commercial waste, on the other-hand, was hardest hit during the pandemic and will take longer to return to pre-pandemic levels of revenue.
- 4.5 The Committee discussed the Public Affairs Strategy for further local government funding and the engagement the council is having with central government on this. Senior Officers said they had submitted into the spending review and the Leader of the Council was engaging with central government on business rates, for example.
- 4.6 Concerning the Council's reserves, the Committee were informed that the Council had £60 million in reserves. An average local authority should have 10% of their net budget in reserves, however Senior Officers recommend for Westminster having on average 30% of their net budget in reserves as Westminster is more vulnerable to economic shock.
- 4.7 The Committee discussed forecast variances. Senior Officers informed the Committee that forecast variances naturally reduce throughout the year as more information is accounted for.

- 4.8 Members of the Committee discussed the Active Westminster Card and the data which will allow discounted reasons to be hidden from view. This concept was building upon the recommendations made within Councillor Karen's Scarborough's Task Group on Access to Culture.
- 4.9 The Committee discussed the ongoing Council-led competition to encourage residents to share their ideas with the Council on how services can become more innovative. Members of the Committee proposed that the Council use data to ensure repair and transport works takes place at less busier times so as to not contribute further to traffic congestion.
- 4.10 Concerning council and business tax collection rates, the Committee were informed that the council were about 3% behind on a normal year and that the council broadly expected levels to return to pre-pandemic levels.

5. CABINET MEMBER FOR CITY MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 The Committee received a written and short verbal update from Councillor James Spencer (Cabinet Member for City Management) who provided an update on current and forthcoming priorities in his portfolio as follows:
- The timeframe for commissioning temporary lavatories across the City;
 - The equal pavement pledge and the engagement the council is having with stake-holders;
 - The increased level of abuse faced by cleaning staff across the City;
 - The increased anti-social behaviour enforcement across the City; and
 - EV charging points and the extent to which this would encourage residents to switch to electric vehicles
- 5.2 The Committee asked if there were enough temporary lavatories in the city's hotspots (e.g. Soho). Senior Officers said the issue was related to poor/lack of signage and directions to temporary facilities. Some Members remained of the view that there were not enough lavatories, particularly for women, across the City.
- 5.3 The Committee were informed that the council had signed up to the equal pavement pledge. The council are engaging with local experts such as local Age UK groups and had also conducted a survey with Transport for All as well as an internal audit to assess accessibility across the City.
- 5.4 The Committee discussed the increased abuse towards street cleaners and were informed that a street cleaner had recently been hospitalised after an attack. The Committee put on record their thanks to the staff across the council that keep the City clean and presentable.

- 5.5 Members of the Committee welcomed the increased enforcement of anti-social behaviour across the City. It was noted that there was a substantial increase in fixed penalty notices, however this approach was very resource intensive and Members questioned if the Council had the capacity to maintain this level of enforcement.
- 5.6 Concerning the EV charging points across the City, the Committee asked if the council had any data to show the increased number of EV charging points is encouraging people to switch to electric cars. Senior Officers thought it was a number of factors that were encouraging people to purchase electric cars.
- 5.7 **ACTIONS:** The Committee requests that:
- It be provided with a breakdown of parking income by vehicle and permits per vehicle to assess the number of electric cars across Westminster.

6. REPORT ON INTERIM RESULTS FROM THE TFL E-SCOOTER TRIAL IN WESTMINSTER

- 6.1 The Committee received a written and short verbal update from Raj Mistry (Executive Director for Environment and City Management) on the interim results of the TFL E-Scooter trial taking place across Westminster.
- 6.2 Elizabeth Gaden (E-Scooter Trial Stakeholder and Contracts Manager at TFL) and Giacomo Vecia (Senior Strategic Transport Officer at City for London Corporation) attended the Committee as expert witnesses.
- 6.3 The Committee discussed the following topics in detail:
- Safety requirements around electric scooters
 - The nuisance the scooters cause to residents
 - Whether it was tourists or residents using the scooters
 - How TFL and the council were tracking complaints
 - Whether the use of the scooters will encourage a model shift from cars
 - If the Scooters were individually identifiable and if licences were required
 - The correlation between increased journeys and injuries
- 6.4 Concerning safety requirements needed to rent a scooter, TFL informed the Committee that in order to rent a scooter a provisional driving licence was required. TFL informed the Committee that out of approximately 300,000 journeys, 9 serious injuries had been reported and that incident rates are not increasing in line with journeys suggesting the majority of journeys are safe. Members of the Committee asked whether helmets needed to become mandatory as there is a risk of head injury using these scooters.

- 6.5 Regarding the nuisance the scooters can cause to residents, TFL informed the Committee that individuals can be charged and/or fined for leaving scooters outside of designated bays or driving dangerously. TFL has a service level agreement with the providers to pick up scooters not left in designated bays within a certain timeframe.
- 6.6 The Committee discussed whether it was tourists or residents using the scooters and whether it was encouraging a switch to active transport if it was just tourists using the scooters.
- 6.7 The Committee were informed that TFL are capturing incidents through the complaints tracker and capturing complaints going to the operator. Members of the Committee questioned whether all incidents were being captured if relying on members of the public to complain to the operators. TFL informed the Committee that there is reliance on self-reporting across all rental equipment including Santander bikes.
- 6.8 Concerning encouraging a model shift from cars, the Committee felt they did not have access to the appropriate data to comment on whether the scooters were encouraging this. However, it was noted by some members that younger people who seemed to be using the scooters more, were setting positive behaviours by using active transport such as this.
- 6.9 It was noted that there were traffic orders in place to allow e-scooters to drive in cycle lanes and that it was illegal for more than one person to ride on an e-scooter. It was also noted that TFL were working to implement an acoustic signalling system into the trail for those with sight impairments.
- 6.10 The Committee discussed pavement parking and how the scooters were causing accessibility issues for disabled people on the pavement. It was noted by the independent witness that the City of London undertook an extensive equality impact assessment before the trial was rolled out across the City of London and disabled accessibility was examined as part of this.
- 6.11 **RESOLVED:** that the Committee note the report.

7. REPORT ON PARKING IN WESTMINSTER IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID19

- 7.1 The Committee received a written report and short verbal update from Jonathan Rowing (Head of Parking Operations) on parking in Westminster in the context of Covid19.
- 7.2 The Committee discussed the following topics in detail:
- Enforcement and parking income

- How to ensure the level of parking income remains the same
 - The safety of traffic enforcement officers
 - If the increase in paid for parking is temporary
 - Parking contracts and the relationship with the workforce
- 7.3 The Committee discussed the significant impact the pandemic had had on parking income, although finances were returning to pre-pandemic levels. The Committee also discussed the long-term future for parking income across the City due to the introduction of the ULEZ in October 2021.
- 7.4 The Committee heard that the Council was taking more robust enforcement measures and had defined several roads as traffic sensitive streets.
- 7.5 Concerning the level of parking income, Members of the Committee expressed their desire to ensure parking income remains constant as it pays for SEND transport across the City.
- 7.6 Concerning the safety of traffic enforcement officers, Members enquired if enforcement officers went out in pairs and whether risk assessments were routinely undertaken. The Committee were informed that Council was strongly considering the inclusion of body-cameras in the new contracts when they next go out for procurement.
- 7.7 The Committee were informed that there had been a significant uptake in pay to park parking. Members enquired if this was individuals returning to the City to work, people not willing to take public transport during the pandemic or tourists. The Committee recommended that Officers try to better understand this data.
- 7.8 The Committee discussed the need for the Council to better understand the socio-demographics of those parking in Westminster. The Committee were informed that only about 4% of parking across the City had resident permits. The Committee suggested that Officers also examine the duration of stays and vehicle type.
- 7.9 The Committee enquired whether Officers were confident whether industrial relations were getting better after previous threats of industrial action.
- 7.10 **ACTIONS:** The Committee requested that:
- The Committee to receive a briefing on the current occupancy levels for Q car parks across Westminster.
- 7.11 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the report.

8. WORK PROGRAMME

8.1 The Committee discussed the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year. The Committee agreed to scrutinise Active Westminster Card at the next Committee.

9. END OF MEETING

9.1 The Chairman formally closed the meeting at 9:04pm.

CHAIRMAN _____

DATE _____

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Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 th March 2022
Report of:	Councillor Paul Swaddle OBE
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City
Report Author and Contact Details:	Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor (mburton@westminster.gov.uk)

1. City for All Vision and Strategy 2022 – Finance and Smart City Priorities

- 1.1 City for All is the Council's vision for Westminster that will improve people's lives for the better and help businesses thrive. A refreshed programme was launched in March 2022.
- 1.2 Through the Smart City programme, we want to deliver:
 - World-class online services for residents and businesses to interact with council services anytime, anywhere.
 - Cutting-edge technology and data to reduce our carbon footprint and encourage environmentally friendly behaviours.
 - Improve digital connectivity to support businesses to thrive and residents to improve their lives.

2. Thriving Economy

Westminster Reveals

- 2.1 Westminster Reveals, the Council's overarching destination marketing campaign won a prestigious National Campaign for the Arts/Local Government Association 'Hearts for the Arts' award for 'Best Arts Project'.
- 2.2 A procurement exercise is underway to appoint a destination marketing agency to continue the success of the last year. Having an agency on board to promote the campaign last year proved to be hugely successful and resulted in significant coverage for key council-led campaigns and the wider range of cultural activity taking place in Westminster. The successful agency will be responsible for further developing the Westminster Reveals brand and maximising coverage for headline activities.
- 2.3 The council's Inside Out festival – one of the highlights of the Westminster Reveals campaign - will be returning for a second year with plans underway for a month of activity throughout August. Discussions are already underway with our cultural partners and other stakeholders to build on the success of last year's inaugural event which featured over 30 collaborations. This will be discussed further at the first of the quarterly calls that we have lined up with cultural partners later this month.
- 2.4 Our hugely popular West End LIVE will be returning to Trafalgar Square on the 25/26 June and we are working with the Society of London Theatre to build on the success of 2021.

- 2.5 The Lakwena artwork above Temple Station is being extended until late summer after which it will be replaced by a new installation as we further develop 'The Artist's Garden' in partnership with the CoLAB.
- 2.6 All of these activities will be hugely important to the recovery of the city by attracting footfall, creating experiences and boosting the local economy through increased dwell time, increased visitor spend and employment opportunities.

Property Investment

- 2.7 The strategic acquisition of 215 Vauxhall Bridge Road which adjoins the councils existing ownerships at Queen Mother Sports Centre and 231 Vauxhall Bridge Road has been approved by the Cabinet Member subject to referral to Policy & Scrutiny Committee on 29th March.
- 2.8 A Cabinet Member report referring to the proposed headlease restructure at 90-104 Berwick Street, has been submitted. This will significantly improve the Council's income receipts from the investment as well as the Capital value. It will also enable interest in the vacant retail units to be unlocked by partnering with Shaftsbury Soho Ltd.
- 2.9 Heads of Terms have been agreed, subject to satisfactory due diligence, to acquire a mixed-use block on the corner of Church Street and Edgware Road which immediately neighbours the Council's proposed regeneration of Site C Church Street.

3. Cleaner and Greener

Re:Fit Programme

- 3.1 As at the end of February 2022 we continue to make substantial progress across all the decarbonisation workstreams.
- 3.2 Energy conservation measures for management systems, lighting, thermal insulation, and draught proofing are nearing completion with installation works for solar PV and Air Source Heat Pumps progressing well and on programme. In the past few weeks alone, solar PV has been installed at 7 sites including Moberly and Queen Mother Sports Centres, Victoria Library, Westminster Mortuary, Dementia Care Centre, Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee and College Park Schools.

Seymour Centre

- 3.3 The recent community consultation questionnaire has provided valuable information to steer the provision of facilities at the new enhanced Seymour Centre. The analysis has shown that an enhanced sports hall and new fitness studios would attract a diverse range of new users. There is support for dual purpose studios and meeting rooms and affordable mixed-use spaces. There is also support for a family hub and community resource which is in line with our emerging library offer.
- 3.4 The intention is for new spaces to be designed flexibly alongside the incorporation of Marylebone Library. This proposition received support from Planners during pre-application discussions in December 2021 and February 2022 and has been reported back to residents at two public meetings in January and February 2022 which attracted over 200 participants.

4. Smart City

Westminster Innovation Challenge

- 4.1 The first Westminster Innovation Challenge is approaching the final assessment stage.
- 4.2 The challenge was launched to ask the public, staff, schools, universities, and community groups to submit ideas that could improve the everyday experiences of people living, working and visiting Westminster. We received 219 individual ideas and each idea was categorised and reviewed by the project team and members of the council's digital inclusion department. 52 ideas were selected to be scored by a shortlisting panel comprising 4 industry technology partners and council stakeholders. Ideas that met a minimum scoring threshold were discussed in two moderation sessions before a final shortlist of 9 ideas was agreed.
- 4.3 These 9 ideas are now under consideration by the final panel, which includes the Cabinet Member, Chief Executive of the Council, Head of Digital and Innovation and key council innovation partners. Once a winner(s) has been decided the ideas will be scoped with partners with a view to prototyping delivery.
- 4.4 Many positive ideas were submitted throughout the process, and there are a number that may not be selected as winners but will be passed on to relevant council departments to consider for implementation. We also plan to offer dedicated workshops to all applicants, allowing them to learn more about the community-based crowd-funding platform Spacehive, and how it could help support and empower them to make any ideas they have a reality, either now or in the future.

Digital Street Markets

- 4.5 Wi-Fi networks have now been deployed to 6 street markets in Westminster (Berwick Street, Rupert Street, Church Street, Maida Hill, Strutton Ground, Tachbrook).
- 4.6 *"The Wi-Fi is a great addition to the market and is helping lots of us to get online and change the way we take payments post Covid. It is also a free service which saves us using our own data allowances"*
- 4.7 At the end of last year, the Council hosted our first two-week digital skills course with over 90 businesses attending the training. This was the first of nine two-week courses that will be run by the end of 2022/23.
- 4.8 Feedback from this first event has been very positive:

"I feel you made the perfect choice in funding such a great team of mentors, that have the ability to influence growth and business nourishment for people whom act now starting to do business."

"Being able to start a business with clear ideas not getting stuck in the business plan but move into action, networking and all the ideas of starting a business with things in my reach that are free has been so valuable to know. Creating a website - wow, never done it and never thought I could do it, learning about motivation and self-confidence crowned it all."
- 4.9 The second two-week course started on the 7 March 2022. 60 businesses have signed up to attend the training which is being run virtually. The training focuses on key digital skills for businesses.

4.10 Future events include:

- 9th to 20th May 2022
- 20th June to 1st June 2022
- 1st to 12th August 2022
- 19th to 30th September 2022
- 31st October to 11th November 2022
- 23rd January to 3rd February 2023
- 6th March to 17th March 2023.

Digital Ambassadors

4.11 Sessions are now running weekly in Maida Vale, Church Street, and St John's Wood libraries. In the first 12 months of the project, we have had 115 individual attend over 54 sessions. Of those who attended, over 50% attended more than one session. The team are working to scale up the programme after the first successful year.

CleanTech

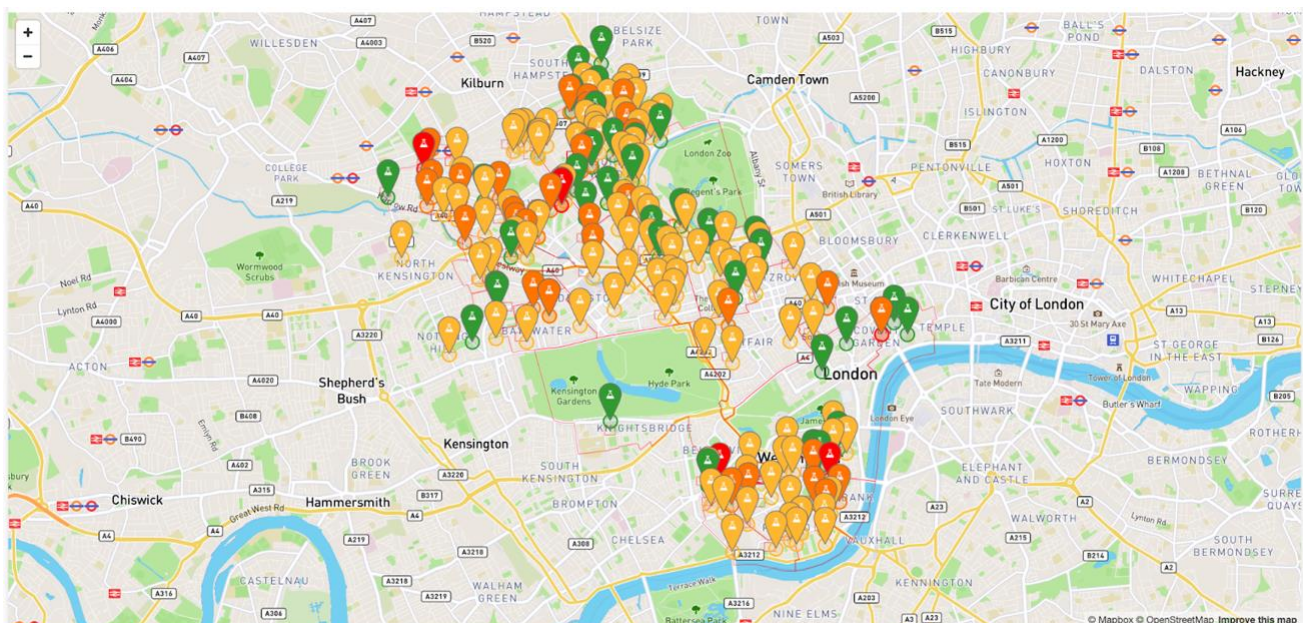
4.12 **Reduction of harmful emissions:** Scheme to audit the baseline carbon emissions of SMEs and providing information on how they can reduce their emissions through, for example, the uptake of CleanTech strategies. The scheme will support 1,000 businesses over two years and would anticipate it to identify £2m of financial savings in the SMEs that participate and save over 50,000 whole life tonnes of carbon.

4.13 **Raise awareness and inform opportunity for behaviour change:** Pilot project installing air quality sensors outside school drop off and pick up areas, to share data about air pollution trends throughout the school and encourage use of more sustainable travel modes e.g. walking, bus, to try and reduce air pollution peaks and drop off and pick up time.

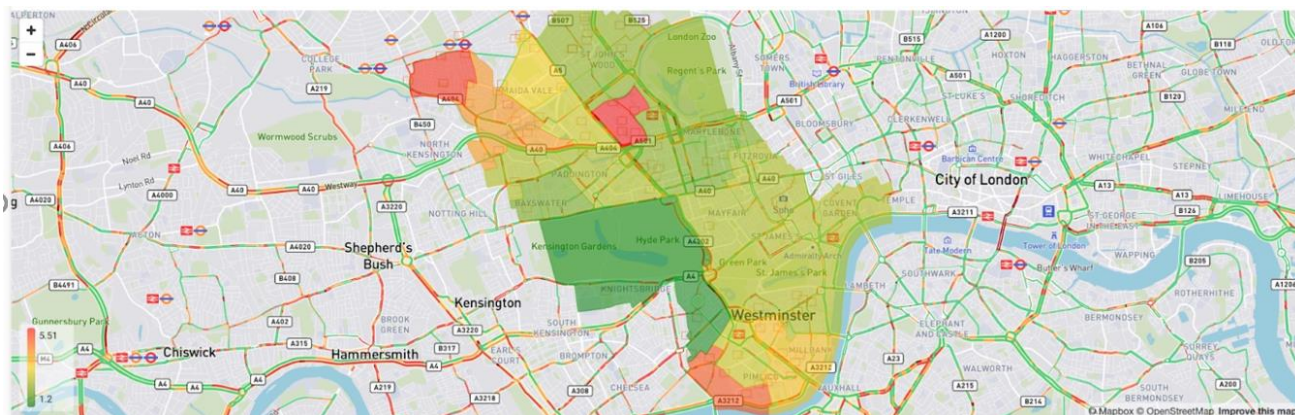
4.14 **Sharing of quality environmental data to empower communities:** Mapping of all air quality data collected across the city into one place and displaying in a user friendly way which helps inform decision making, such as reducing impact or exposure. A prototype dashboard has been created and exploring across the organisation how it could be used to help inform residents and influence behaviour.

Example screen shots of the prototype dashboard are shown below:

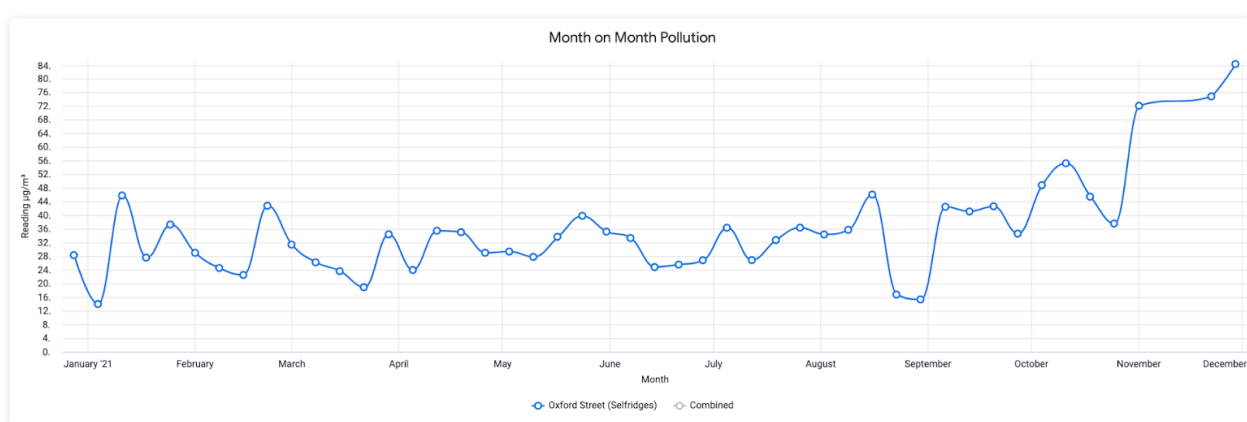
Air Quality monitoring locations:



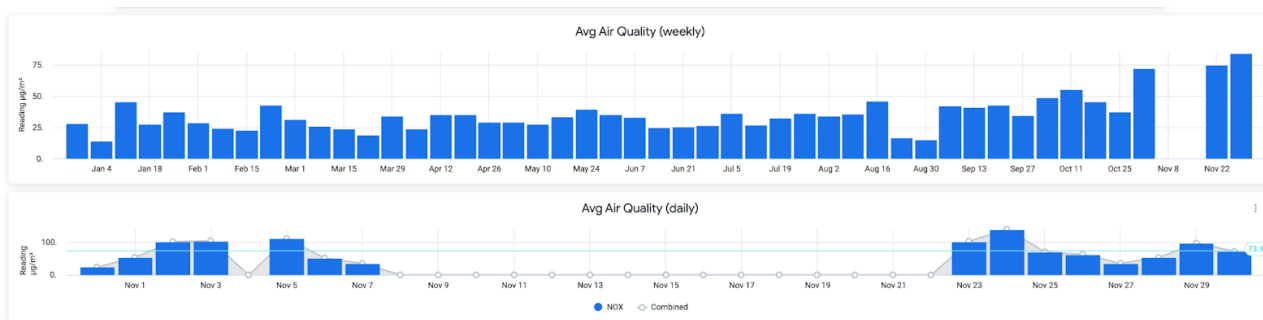
Asthma prevalence by ward:



Example graph of data from the Oxford Street (Selfridges) monitoring location:



Example graphs of weekly and daily average Nitrogen Dioxide levels:



5. ADDITIONAL PORTFOLIO UPDATES

Budget 2022/23

- 5.1 Westminster City Council has confirmed its budget for 2022/23. At a meeting on Tuesday 2 March, Full Council agreed to freeze the general element of its Council Tax for the next financial year (2022/23), with a 1% Adult Social Care precept increase that is ringfenced to fund the council's adult social care services for residents.
- 5.2 Recognising the inflationary pressures that residents are under in the aftermath of COVID-19 and the increase in the cost of living, the Band D Council Tax will result in an annual increase of £4.64 or an equivalent weekly amount of 9p per week.

5.3 In addition, the Council has maintained a 100% Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23 that largely mirrors the previous national Council Tax Benefit scheme. This means that Westminster Council has not reduced the level of Council Tax Support provided to our residents since the abolition of the Council Tax Benefit scheme.

Fig 1: Map of London boroughs' Council Tax Band D rates. Westminster City Council is the lowest Band D in London and the UK



Budget Monitor - outturn forecast as at December 2021

[All papers relating to the budget can be found here.](#)

5.4 At the end of December 2021 (Period 9) the following variances have been identified compared to the budget approved in March 2021:

- Revenue: General Fund - £3.4 million overspend (1.88% of net controllable budget)
- Revenue: Housing Revenue Account (HRA) - £3.1 million underspend

	FY Budget (£m)	FY Forecast (£m)	FY Variance (£m)
NET BUDGET (General Fund)	182.759	186.189	3.43
NET BUDGET (HRA)	0.855	(2.209)	(3.064)

- Capital: General Fund – £10.6 million net underspend against a total net budget of £189m
- Capital HRA - £5.4 million underspend against a total budget of £165m

5.5 The General Fund revenue variances are due to several under and overspends across all directorates. Primarily the overspend is a result of reduced income in comparison to budget. The four income streams with the highest variances are:

Major Income Streams with Losses	Full Year Budget £m	Full Year Forecast £m	Full Year Shortfall Variance £m
Parking	84.770	83.670	1.100
Commercial Waste	13.720	13.220	0.500
Licensing	3.050	2.548	0.502
Planning	7.142	4.642	2.500

5.6 Period 6 to Period 9 Changes - Headlines

- The forecast variance has improved by £1.170m since period 6. The main movement is the £2.550m reprofiling of Collaborative Savings (previously reported as a risk) offset by a £1.9m underspend on concessionary fares that follows from reduced transport usage across London. Working from home continues to have a significant impact on footfall. Concessionary fares costs are modelled as being £1.9m cheaper from three years from 2022/23 which has been offered as a savings in the July 2021 MTFP update.
- Furthermore, there has been an improved variance of £0.100m in Adult Social Care, £0.600m in Finance and Resources, £0.200m in Children’s Services and £0.100m in Innovation and Change compared to period 6.
- There has also been an adverse variance of £0.400m in Growth, Planning and Housing and £0.380m in Environment and City Management

5.7 The HRA is forecasting an underspend of £3.1 million. Salaries are the main contributor to this underspend due to vacant posts pending a restructure.

5.8 The General Fund and HRA capital programmes are forecasting a net variance compared to budget of £10.6 million (5.6% of total budget) and £5.4 million (3.3% of total budget), respectively. This is an improvement compared with the same period in 2020/21 which demonstrates that projects are progressing as we emerge from the pandemic.

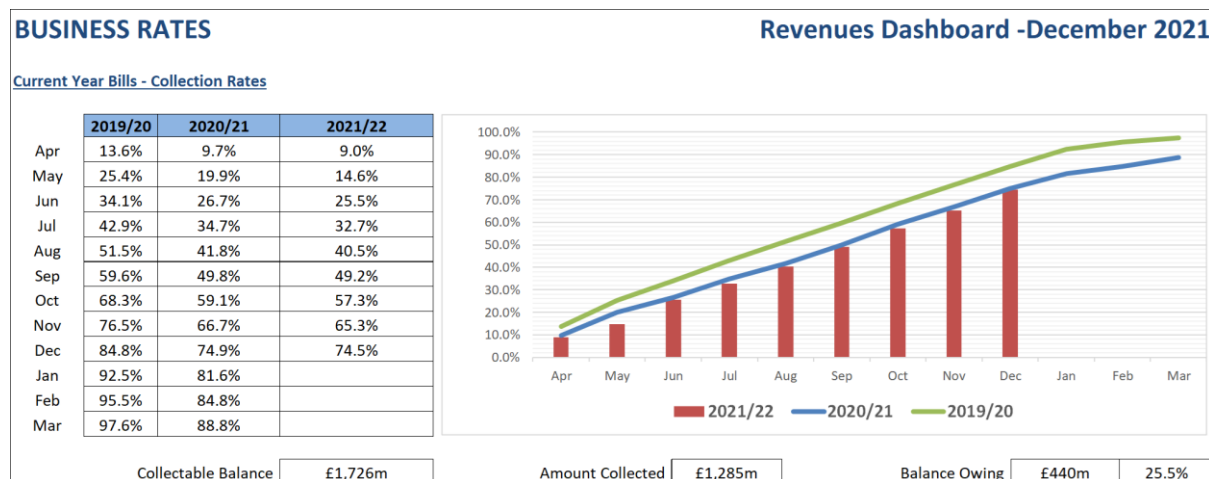
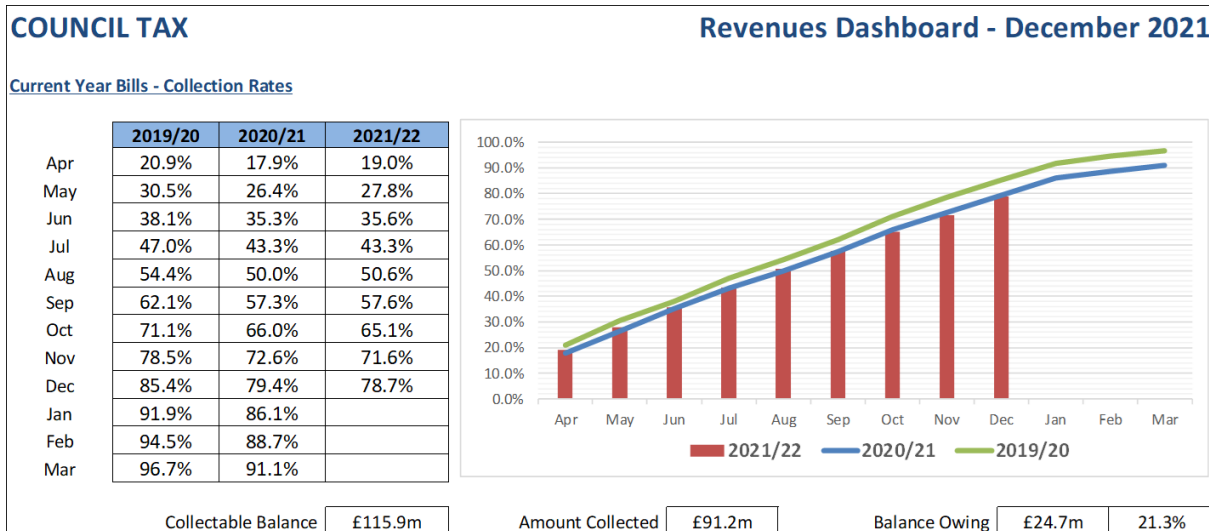
5.9 Council Tax and Business Rates are the Council’s largest income sources, and the Council has a responsibility to collect on behalf of the GLA and government. It collects and recognises in its account the following:

- Gross Council Tax (including GLA share): £111m
- Gross Business Rates (Including GLA & Central Government share): £2.3bn

5.10 However, the Council only retains £182m of this income (Council Tax £62m and Business Rates £120.5m) for its own use. If there is a reduced business rates income as witnessed through Covid the maximum the Council can lose is £6.8m, reducing the recognised income from £120.5m to £113.7m.

5.11 Also, it should be noted that the collection figures in this section are based on gross income and collection rates for December 2021.

	December 2021 Collection Rate	December 2020 Collection Rate	December 2019 Collection Rate	Difference
Business Rates	74.5%	74.9%	84.8%	-0.4%
Council Tax	78.7%	79.4%	85.4%	-0.7%



5.12 The tables above show that there are improvements in collection rates for business rates and council tax compared to previous months.

5.13 Business rates collection has shown positive signs of improvement, not at the level seen in 2020/21, however major improvements have been recorded compared to the first 3 months of this financial year where there was an adverse difference in rates compared to last year of 6.7%, whereas it is only -0.4% as at period 9.

5.14 Council Tax recovery has surpassed the rates reported last year, especially in the first 3 months. As at period 9 we are reporting a reduction of 0.7% compared to collection rate last year.

Cabinet Member Decisions

5.15 Since the last report, as Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City the following decisions have been made:

- Ebury Bridge Estate Renewal -Phase 2 Appointments;
- Rating Advisory Panel 26/10/2021;
- Disposal of Intermediate Rent Homes at Parsons North to Westminster Builds;
- Contact Centre Operating Model Review;
- Ebury Phase 1 Project Manager, Employers Agent, Quantity Surveyor Appointment;
- NNDR Hardship scheme for 2021/22 applications;
- 300 Harrow Road (Warwick Hall) Final Business Case;
- Lisson Arches Full Business Case;
- 300 Harrow Road Appropriation of Land for Planning Purposes;
- Convenience Store Lease Renewal;
- Rating Advisory Panel 07/12/2021;
- Household Support Fund;
- Rehousing Policy for Residents of Huguenot House;
- Award of Royal Mail Postal Discount Contract;
- Luxborough Street Development, London, W1U - Appropriation for Planning Purposes;
- Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) Scheme, Tranche 3 Part 2;
- Council Tax, NNDR, Housing Benefit Overpayments, Former Client Rent Arrears and Sundry Irrecoverable Debt, Quarter 1 2021/22;
- Appointment of Contractor for the Coroner's Court Project;
- Ratings Advisory Panel 25/01/2022;
- Additional Restrictions Grant, Tranche 4 (Proposals to support Businesses impacted by the omicron variant);
- Sustainable Heating System (AAC Sites);
- Purchase of properties for Accommodation of Former Rough Sleepers; and
- Huguenot House Soft Market Testing (note of recommendations)

5.16 Key Performance Indicators

- By the end of 2021 95% of Council housing stock was connected to full fibre.
- As at February 2022 Council Tax collection rate to date is 88.3% which is 0.4% lower than the same month last year.
- The Business Rates collection rate for September 2021 is 87.4%, which is 2.6% higher than the same month last year.

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Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 29 March 2022

Report of: Councillor James Spencer

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for City Management

Report Author and Contact Details: Alexandra Severino (adseverino@westminster.gov.uk)

1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – City Management

1.1 Cleaner and Greener

1.1.1 Movement Strategy Temporary Cycle Lanes

The Cycling Movement Strategy ('temp cycle') schemes consultation ran from 10th November to 8th December 2021. A total of 1,471 people responded to the consultation questionnaire. A key finding from the consultation included that across all 11 areas, the majority of respondents (Residents > 72%, Non-Resident > 81%) support the proposal for both temporary and permanent cycle lanes.

Findings from the public consultation will be combined with that of the Monitoring Report and technical stakeholder feedback to facilitate a decision by the Cabinet Member for City Management to retain and develop permanent proposals for each location. Designs complete based on monitoring and feedback is due to be compiled by the end of March 2022.

1.1.2 Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Points

Through the Council's *Climate Action Plan* we have set a target of installing a further 500 charge points by the end of 2022. Currently there are 24 rapid charge points on the public highway throughout the City, with 11 of them being exclusively for taxis and the remainder available to all EVs. Another 7 rapid charging sites are waiting for install, 4 of those will be installed by the end of April. A further 30 rapid charging sites are planned for installation in 2022/2023.

The charging points currently provided by PodPoint will be replaced by with the Source London contract. Once transferred, the 11 bays will become income-generating for the Council. The BP Pulse contract extension negotiations are still ongoing and are currently looking positive. We are working with Source London to vary their contract to allow the deployment of rapid chargers more easily.

The following map (https://jhumb1.github.io/wcc_ev_chargers/#map) includes all EV charge point locations in Westminster. Through the 'About' tab, a graph has been produced exemplifying the growth of installations over the last four years as well as a table displaying charge point pricing.

1.1.3 Cycle Hangers

With the review of secure cycle parking demands across the City of Westminster now complete, over the next 12 months, we are targeting installation of 50+ new secure cycle storage units (300 secure spaces) across the borough. The WCC Parking Operations team now manages rentals across all Westminster Housing Estates and have commenced rentals of available spaces based on a refreshed waiting list. Residents can apply for a space on the Council's website via our interactive cycle parking map. Alternatively, if their preferred unit is unavailable, they can register an interest for secure parking in their area by completing our 'Register an Interest' webform. They will then be allocated an available space in their 'hangar catchment' based on their desired maximum walking distance. Annual rentals are £40 (plus 25% discount for WCC housing tenants). The

Parking team will continue to refine internal processes until mid-2022 when a decision will be taken on the delivery model.

Our Highway Hangars are currently managed by our suppliers Cyclehoop and Falco. Residents can apply to rent a space or join a waiting list for the hangar by applying directly to our suppliers' website. Pending a successful pilot of the WCC managed rental of housing estates units, the new process will be rolled out to all WCC owned hangars. Annual rentals are £72, payable to our suppliers.

1.1.4 E-Scooters Trial

A recent decision has been taken to extend the Westminster E-Scooter Trial until November 2022. As part of the trial, the Council has set out areas of the borough where the speed of e-scooters should be restricted. 'Go -slow' zones and areas where e-scooters would not be allowed 'no-go' areas. These areas are managed by geofencing technology. After the trial started, it was recognised that the speed cap of 8.5mph (versus 12.5mph) posed safety concerns alongside running traffic in the carriageway, where the e-scooters are intended to be used as. It was agreed that the removal of the 'go-slow' areas would be implemented across the borough. A blanket removal of the 'go-slow' areas was agreed to avoid confusion for riders, and it was agreed that small increase in speed would have marginal impact on pedestrian safety. The removal of the 'go-slow' areas is being monitored and can be reintroduced if required. See *Appendix A, figure 1* for a map of 'no-go' zones in Westminster.

1.2 Thriving Economy

1.2.1 Supporting Hospitality Businesses - Al-Fresco Scheme

The support for hospitality businesses, offering outdoor dining space, has been provided by the Council since June 2020. The current programme, which created an extra 16,000 covers, came to an end on 30th September 2021, as businesses can now operate to capacity indoors. The road closures and barriers that were in place have now all been removed. It should be noted that businesses can still apply for a licence to allow outdoor dining on pavements, providing there is sufficient space to enable access without support from the Council. See *Appendix A* for a table on additional covers by ward for live Al Fresco Schemes as of 16 March 2022.

2. Major Cabinet Member Decisions

- Amendment to Appendix 2 of December 2021 Fees and Charges Cabinet Report
- Annual Review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent and associated HRA charges 2022/2023 (Joint with Cabinet Member for Housing)
- Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) programme for 2022/23 in respect of Highways, Public Lighting & Bridges and Structures
- Variation of Waste Collection and Street Cleansing Contract with Veolia ES Ltd to Replace Diesel Waste and Recycling Collection Vehicles with Electric Vehicles

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Equal Pavement Pledge

The Council has signed up to Transport for All's (TFA) equal pavement pledge. TFA state 'As lockdown restrictions gradually begin to lift and we look towards opening up and "building back better", there's never been a better opportunity to reset and centre accessibility at the heart of our plans.' The pledges include: 1. Listen and Act, 2. Keep it clear 3. Cut the clutter, 4. Mind the trash, 5. Drop the kerbs, 6. Protect the blue badge bays, 7. Work with disabled experts.

The Public Realm Team has recently engaged TFA to provide training to officers on how to consider and view accessibility on our streets and engage with experts early in the design of public realm schemes. A programme of dropped kerbs and accessibility improvements has been developed for Soho and across the borough. Funding is being sought from the Capital Programme to enable delivery. Work continues with our Licensing team and City Inspectors to ensure pavements are being kept clear of clutter and rubbish. We are currently consulting on our al fresco schemes to ensure they also meet the Equal Pavement Pledge.

3.2 Public Conveniences

The Council continues to deploy 18 urinals and 12 'portaloo' facilities each weekend (Friday to Monday) at identified problem locations across the West End. The facilities are very well used and will continue to be deployed throughout the winter period. A consultant has been appointed to develop a new concept design for the Council's public toilets and site surveys have commenced. Key objectives for the new design will include the installation of contactless payment barriers, increased CCTV and security measures, green features and improved external 'wayfinding' signage.

Tenders have been received to replace our current units of Automatic Public Toilets (5 locations). Tenders are currently being evaluated with the objective of commissioning works to take place during Spring 2022. The current units are more than 20 years old. The replacement units will be easier to maintain and remotely monitored so that closing times can be adjusted as required. The priority list of installations are as follows: 1. Broadwick Street, W1, 2. Oxford Street / Balderton Street, W1, 3. Regent Street / Princes Street, W1, 4. Regency Street, SW1 and 5. Harrow Road 'Maida Hill Market', W9. Our plan is to have the first installation completed by end of May 2022.

3.3 Covent Garden Neighbourhood Traffic Management Scheme (NTM)

The implementation of a traffic management scheme across the Covent Garden district were implemented on a trial basis in December 2021 under an Experimental Traffic Order (ETO). A series of surveys and monitoring exercises will be conducted during the period of the trial, the first one will take place in March 2022 once the scheme has 'bedded in'. Residents, businesses, stakeholders and the public can comment on the scheme during the trial via a dedicated website or mailbox, both of which have been widely publicised. Any comments received will be considered by the project team along with observations from the monitoring and surveys and action taken if an issue is identified. The ETO is due to run for up to 18 months and, depending on the outcome of the trial, a decision will be sought whether to make the scheme permanent or revert to previous arrangements.

3.4 Parking Update

Procurement process for the new service structure underway. It is hoped that the Technology tender will be awarded in the coming weeks while invitations to tender for all other aspects of Parking should be going out over the next two months. Parking activity continues to return to normal but is still below pre-COVID-19 levels. A full City-Wide occupation survey is currently being commissioned to deliver results by late summer 2022. This will help understand kerbside demand, service needs, and how the external variables (COVID-19, ULEZ etc) have impacted parking in Westminster. See *Appendix A, figure 2* for a table on parking services currently in procurement.

3.5 Highways Update

The Council submitted a new Local Implementation Plan (LIP) bid on 1 November 2021 which consisted of a detailed delivery plan for schemes to be funded by TfL for 2022/23 and an outline of our indicative plans for 2023/24 to 2024/25. The bid consists of a programme of 'Corridors' schemes for cycle, pedestrian, bus priority, road safety, schools etc works, 'Cycle Routes' and 'Bus Priority' routes. For 2022/23 these combine to a £4,813,000 bid though this remains subject to TfL, the Mayor and Central Government agreeing a 'Bail out' agreement for 2022/23 and the next two years thereafter. 5 low carbon schemes have been completed so far this year. 87% of the LED Lighting programme is now complete.

3.6 Parks and Open Spaces Update

Capital investment in play areas continues with Westbourne Green Senior Play Area having new equipment installed. Due to good weather and the near end of winter. A full service of all outdoor gym equipment is taking place due to the high amount number of individuals making use of them. Play areas are being check annually by the ROSPA inspector which give us a good indication of where next years budgets will be spent.

An extensive wildflower meadow is being planned for Berkley Square this spring together with further bulb planting. All works associated with the meadow are a Parks project aside from the supply of daffodil bulbs which were paid for by the Landowner. Additional park benches have been placed in St Johns Garden-Horseferry Road to allow for quiet use of the garden adding to users health and wellbeing in green spaces. 15 new notice boards are being installed in several parks & gardens giving local friends groups and others the opportunity to give information to park users. This will also encourage fitness groups to inform others of activities in the green space.

Appendix A

Figure 1 – Map of ‘no-go’ zones in Westminster.

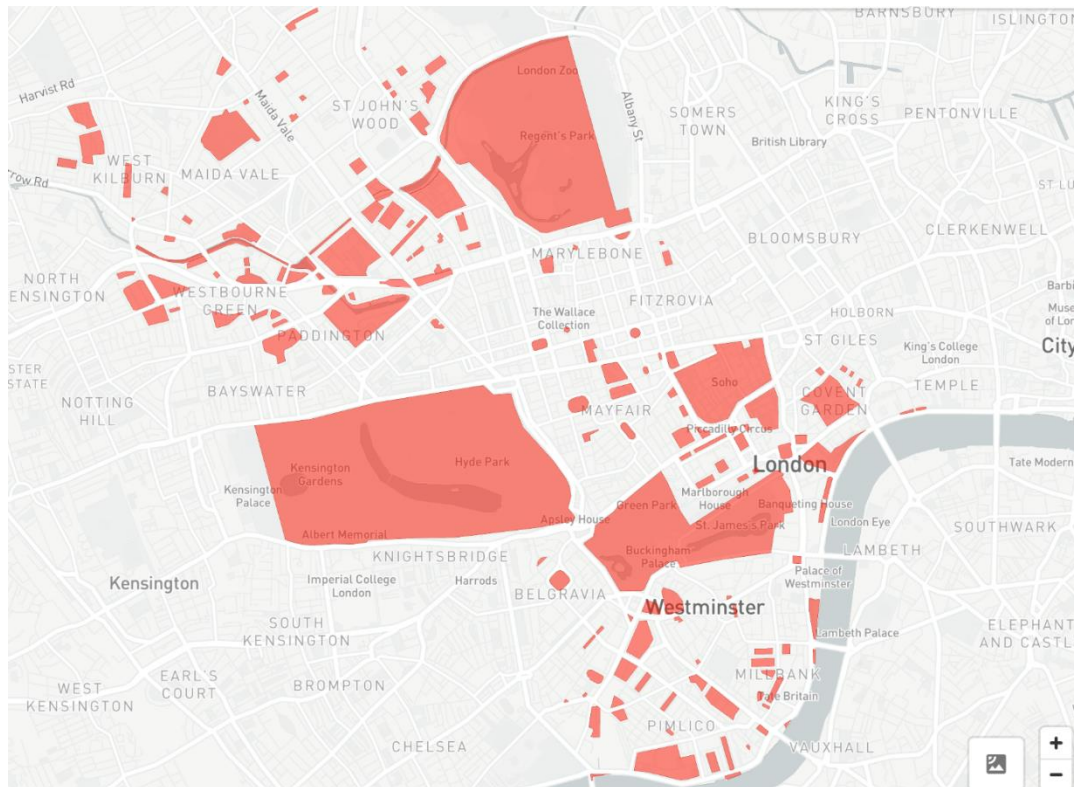


Figure 2 – Parking Services in Procurement.

Title	Contains	Status	Comments
Technology	Provision of the IT systems that support the issuing of PCNs and management of Permits and suspensions. Provision of handhelds devices. Owning the interface between providers.	In final stages of procurement process and due to be awarded in coming weeks	Run on a longer term contract will enable us to avoid re-procurement whenever the other contracts providers change. Separate contract increases our control and reduces costs
People and Resources	The contract provides a flexible pool of skilled resources for deployment to manage the kerbside space. The Council determines the level of Resources required and times of deployment, while the Service Provider manages these resources and the day-to-day operation	Invitations to Tender to be issued within next 4-6 weeks	Includes items such as Radios, uniforms, equipment, vehicles etc which are currently provided separately outside of this contract
Business Processing	Delivering Parking Services' back office functions to manage full processing and issuing of all permissions, handling of PCNs and complaints, and issuing of Camera enforcement PCNs. All other back office customer facing and support duties.	Invitations to Tender to be issued within next 4-6 weeks	By removing B&P from the technical elements we gain greater opportunity to source a more dynamic (perhaps non-Parking-specialist) provider at a lower price.
Cashless	Dedicated cashless parking software provider to manage the on street paid-for parking activity.	Invitations to Tender to be issued within next 4-6 weeks	Currently subcontracted through Business Processing Contract. A separate contract increases our control over change, encourages dynamism, and reduces costs.
Cameras	Dedicated contractor to provide camera systems to enable the issuing of Camera PCNs by the BP team.	Invitations to Tender to be issued within next 4-6 weeks	Currently subcontracted through Business Processing Contract. A separate contract avoids suppliers being frozen out of the market by "lock-in" deals by the big parking providers of B&P etc.
Relocations	Specific contractor to manage relocations and removals.	Invitations to Tender to be issued within next 4-6 weeks	Including Abandoned Vehicles which is currently managed via Debt contract
Audit and Compliance	Undertakes checks on routine KPIs and SLAs for other contractors and supports Client in getting best value from the contracts	TBC. The spec of the service/function required will be determined by the other procurements.	
Debt Management	Full service debt management with proactive management of potential cases.	Not intended to go to market. Current contract has plenty of scope to extend. Will be reviewed to ensure best value.	Move Abandoned Vehicles to sit with Relocations

Figure 3 – Additional covers by ward for live AI Fresco Schemes as of 16 March 2022.

Ward Name	Licences per Ward	Additional Covers
Abbey Road	3	80
Bayswater	9	104
Bryanston and Dorset Square	11	234
Churchill	4	69
Hyde Park	5	180
Knightsbridge and Belgravia	19	336
Lancaster Gate	10	80
Little Venice	12	160
Maida Vale	6	80
Marylebone High Street	46	787
Regent`s Park	20	324
St James`s	242	5869
Vincent Square	6	64
Warwick	15	332
West End	184	3314
Grand Total	592	12013



Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 March 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Councillors' IT Provision post May 2022
Report of:	Janis Best, Committee and Councillor Support Manager
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Finance and Smart City
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Janis Best, Committee and Cllr Support Manager, jbest@westminster.gov.uk , 07971 920521

1. Executive Summary

In advance of the 2022 local elections this paper sets out some of the key themes and possible options for Councillors' IT support in the new Council term.

The Committee's feedback and recommendations on this paper will form part of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City's final proposal for Councillors' IT support from 2022 onwards.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The Committee were asked in advance of this meeting (Appendix A) for initial thoughts on the points below; comments received have been included in the options later in this report.

- Does £1,000 feel like a reasonable amount for a four-year period to cover an individual Councillors' IT requirements?
- What are the Committee's views on the options set out to provide hardware to enable Councillors to fulfil their roles?

- How should we approach situations where Councillors have already purchased hardware privately – should they still be entitled to an allowance or to claim expenses at the same level as others?
- How could we handle situations where Councillors start a four-year term by taking one approach from the options set out but then wish to switch e.g. they have privately purchased equipment but then wish to be given a Council device – should any expenses be repaid for example?
- In the experience of members of the Committee, what other considerations should be factored into decision making on the future of Councillors' IT provision?
- What training do Councillors feel they need in order to use the systems in place – what would they recommend new Councillors are trained in when first elected?
- What support do Councillors feel they might need to be 'digital by choice'?

3. Background

Since March 2020 Councillors have had to adapt to remote working and virtual meetings. This has transformed how they interact with the Council's systems; brought into light what equipment is needed and what support is also required to maintain this new way of working.

It is anticipated that as we move forward hybrid meetings and a greater reliance on virtual meeting technology and digital paperwork will become ingrained in the work of Councillors.

This paper looks at options for supporting Councillors in this move and asks the Committee to consider these and provide their own steer on how this support can work best for Councillors and enable them to perform their duties successfully.

4.0 Key issues

4.1 Provision of hardware

The Council does not supply Councillors with IT equipment and instead provides £1,000 allowance every four years for Councillors to purchase any products which would enable them to perform their duties. Therefore, at present most Councillors are using their own devices to complete Council work, which can work well where Councillors are adept at using IT.

It can, however, also cause difficulty when support is required for both hardware and software issues, as the IT helpdesk cannot access any personal devices remotely.

This makes it hard for problems encountered by Councillors to be diagnosed and solved. The helpdesk is open in working hours Monday to Friday and an out of hours service is also available.

There are also concerns about the safety of data on personal devices as not all Councillors have engaged with the IT team to get multi-factor authentication (strengthened security) on their devices.

Alternative options

- a. Provision of Council owned hardware:** All Councillors could be automatically provided with a Microsoft Surface Pro for Council work. These devices would be built and owned by the Council, which means that there is full support for them including replacements if necessary. As part of this offer, we would also provide a Surface pen, adaptors and a large screen for home working, if needed. The device would be 'loaned' from the Council and therefore will be expected to be returned when a Councillor is no longer in post.
- b. Purchase of personal equipment:** For Councillors who do not want to take up the above offer, they could be provided with a clear specification for what is appropriate to purchase, but they would not be able to access the full support for their personally purchased hardware from the IT helpdesk. The specification would include processing power, ability to run Office 365 and a high standard of camera and microphone.

If Councillors prefer to take this option an allowance would be provided.

- c. Configuration of existing personal equipment:** For Councillors wishing to configure any existing equipment they would need to ensure they adhere to all IT policies including multi factor authentication on all devices which access the Council's network and ensure that the equipment is able to run all the platforms that they will need e.g., suitable processing power, microphone and camera.

Where Councillors take such an approach, they could be entitled to an IT allowance on the grounds that they had previously purchased equipment which already enables them to do their job but may have additional requirements.

4.2 Allowance level

As mentioned above, at present, an allowance of £1,000 is provided for all Councillors for the purchase of IT equipment. Taking the approach above, in providing Council-owned hardware to Councillors, would mean removing the default £1,000 allowance for all Councillors and taking a more flexible approach based on support requirements.

The allowance is subject to PAYE taxation and so the £1,000 is the gross amount provided. The Committee are asked to consider whether this amount is still suitable for the purchase of equipment that would be used over the four-year period.

If Councillors decide part way through the term to switch, from using personal equipment to being provided with Council-owned hardware, the suggestion is that any allowance provided is paid back on a pro-rata basis.

4.3 'Digital by choice'

Since the pandemic the Council has shifted significantly to a larger proportion of virtual or hybrid meetings and a large reduction in the printing of papers, which has in the most part been very successful.

In line with the Council's aim to be carbon neutral by 2030 we are suggesting that printing of papers for all formal Council meetings is reduced as much as possible and Councillors are encouraged to be digital by choice. Any accessibility issues will of course be considered on a case-by-case basis.

We are suggesting the above could be achieved in a number of ways.

Research has been started into possible applications/platforms which would support Councillors to be more digital. Initial research has indicated that the Committee Management System the Council already use (Modern.Gov) can provide an app which would enable the annotation of papers on multiple devices. In addition, in providing Council-owned hardware, we can supply Surface pens to enable the above more effectively.

This move to a paperless future is being pursued by other Councils and we will link into the research that they are doing – most notably City of London are working via an ADSO (Association of Democratic Officers) network to look into solutions.

Printers are available in both Members' Rooms and on all floors in City Hall so if Councillors prefer paper copies these can be accessed via those, and we would make this more easily accessible, with training provided if needed, and simple to use for Councillors.

Alternatively, there is the potential to provide a personal printing allowance. This would be a finite budget, allocated to Councillors who do not wish to purchase products to support them to work digitally. This allowance could be used in the Council's print room on a self-serve basis i.e. Councillors send requests directly to the print room for printing and a deduction is made from their personal printing budget.

Such a budget could vary in line with a Councillor's responsibilities i.e. a higher budget would be available for Councillors sitting on a greater number of committees. As an example, a set of Licensing Sub-Committee papers cost between £12 - £17 to print, depending on size.

4.4 IT policies, support and training

The Governance and Councillor Support and IT teams are investigating the option of employing a dedicated Councillor 'IT set up' officer for a short-term period, i.e. from April – September 2022 to provide Councillors with a direct point of contact for any issues in the months after the election. This officer would also run drop-in sessions and inductions on equipment, use of Office365 and signposting to what support is available and where.

The new Members' SharePoint Hub will also contain up to date information on equipment, training sessions and signposting for Councillor queries.

There is not a great awareness of the IT policies by Councillors, which could in the worst-case scenario lead to a large fine for the Council and to Councillors as individuals if there is a data breach. An annual cyber security and data protection course is delivered, and a large number of Councillors have installed Multi Factor Authentication on their personal devices. However, attendance and installation are not at 100% which they should be.

Therefore, it is proposed that all Councillors will be required to sign up to the Council's IT policies and there will be mandatory attendance on annual cyber security and data protection training for all Councillors whether new or re-elected. Multi Factor Authentication will also automatically be applied to all Councillor accounts.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Janis Best on 07971 920521 or jbest@westminster.gov.uk

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City of Westminster

Finance, Smart City & City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 March 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Website Update
Report of:	Aruj Haider
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Smart City www.westminster.gov.uk/cabinet
Wards Involved:	All / Specific
Policy Context:	...
Report Author and Contact Details:	Martin Chaney mchaney@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on plans to improve the Westminster City Council website to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our residents and businesses.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

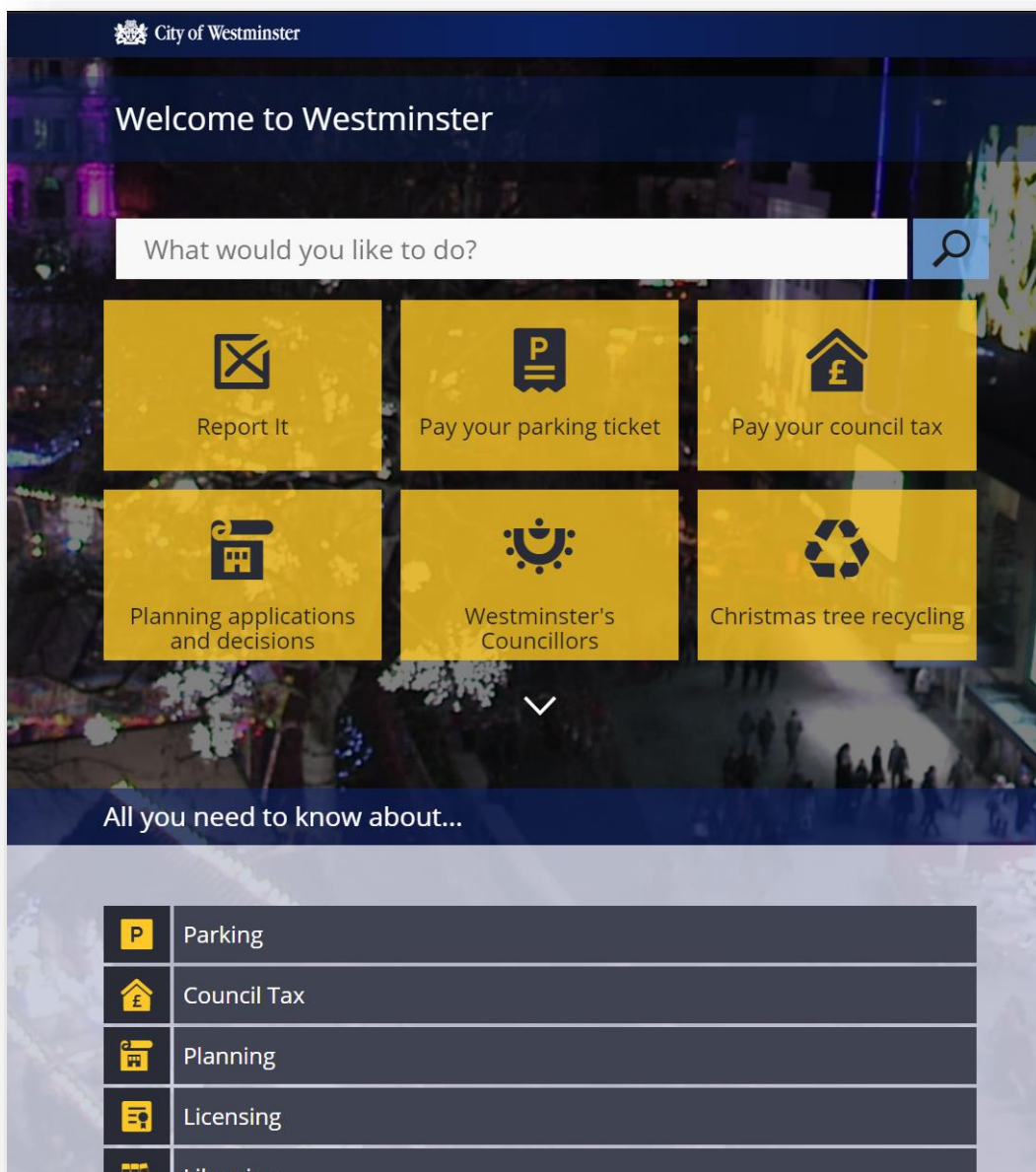
The committee are asked to provide a view on the following:

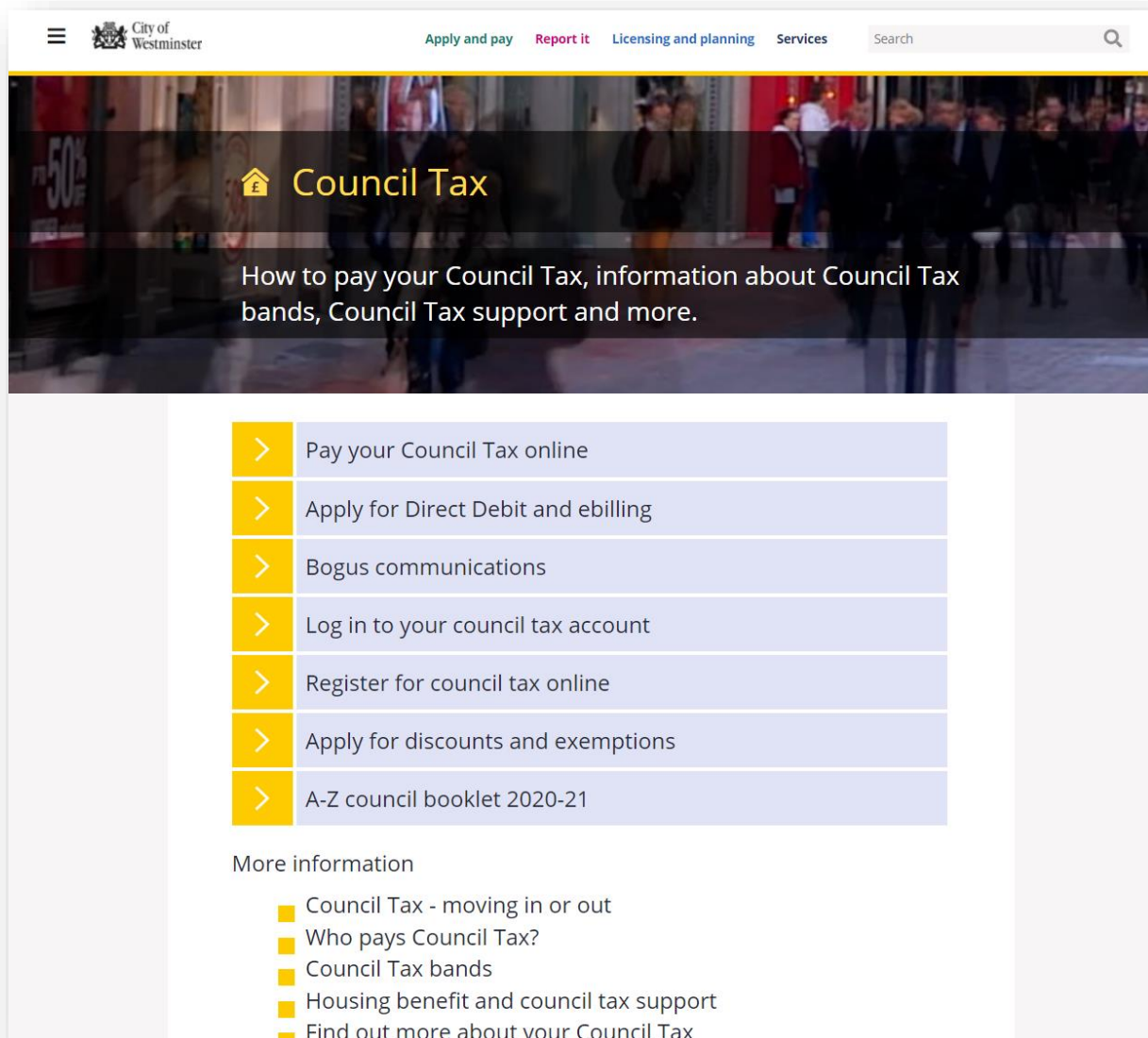
- The committee are asked for the views on the aims of the website strategy, outlined in this paper
- The committee are also asked for their views on the success measures stated both in the website strategy and the online mystery shopping.
- The committee are further asked for their views on personalisation and how they see this aligning with the council's strategic objectives.

3. Background

In 2019 a decision was made to rethink and modernise the Westminster City Council website. There was a pressing need to provide residents, businesses and visitors with an intuitive, simplified and streamlined online experience. The vision was to completely overhaul the website, turning it into a seamless site that puts the user first and 'knows you like a friend'.

2019/20 website homepage





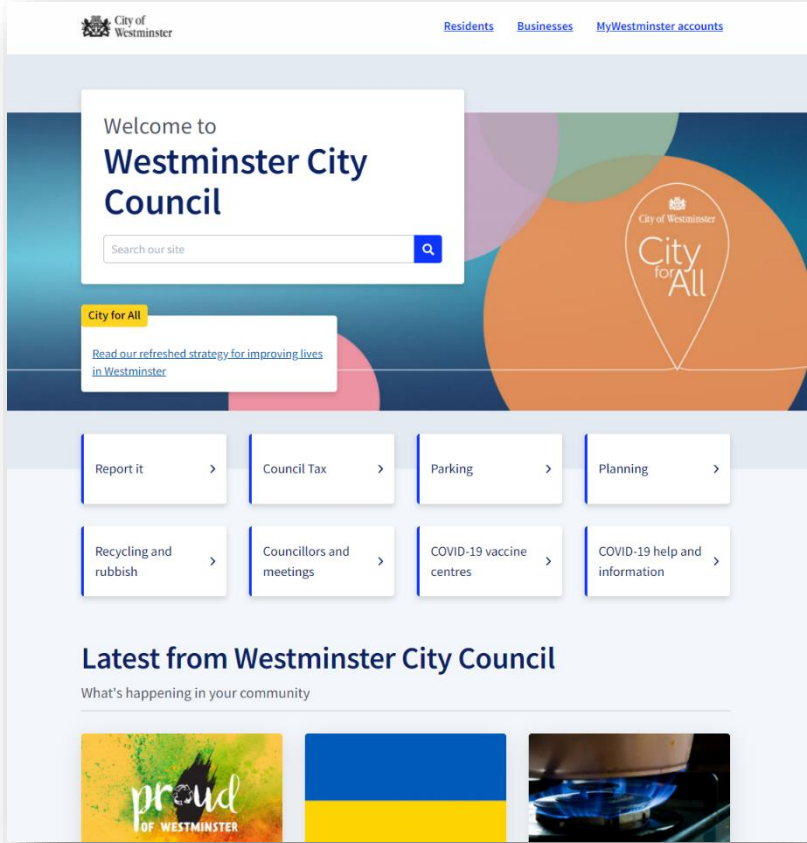
Following an in-depth discovery phase, providing insights and recommendations, a new website was launched in January 2021. The site introduced a new design, structure and an improved overall user experience. It was created on open-source technology, shared with other local authorities, including RBKC.

Project highlights include:

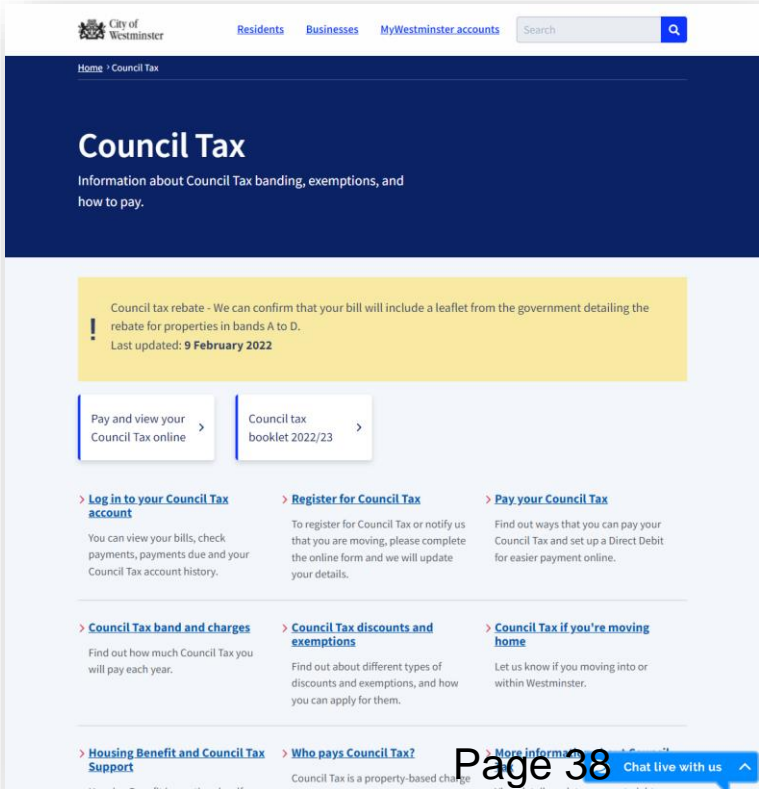
- Co-designed with users
- Content re-written and rationalised
- Enhanced accessibility
- Introduced a reliable, intuitive content approach from a template/look and feel perspective
- Embed best practice in digital content, from Plain English to enhanced SEO and appropriate use of imagery

Westminster.gov.uk has been completely redesigned and is now based on a future-proof platform. As with all websites, we need to keep improving it in line with our understanding of user needs and business objectives.

2021/22 Homepage (current)

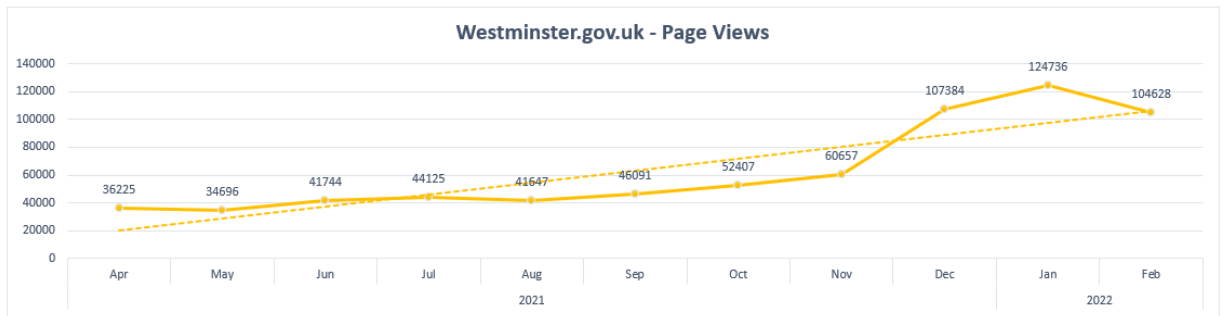


2021/22 Council tax page (current)



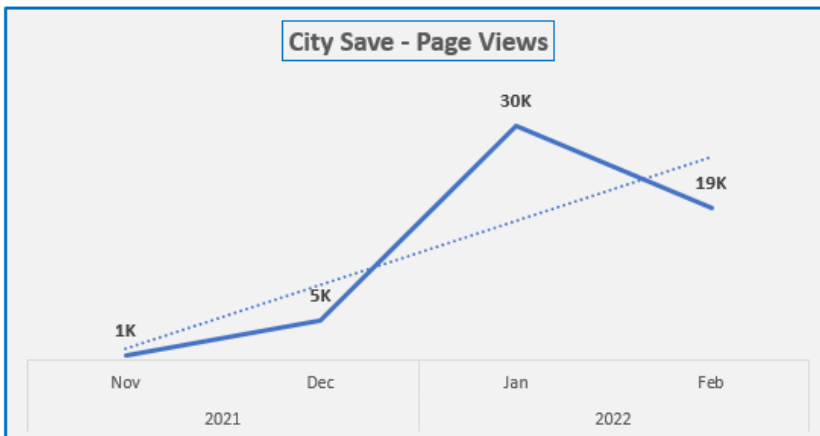
Traffic to westminster.gov.uk has been steadily increasing, as more services go online, and microsites are migrated to the main site.

Westminster.gov.uk monthly page views (last 12 months)

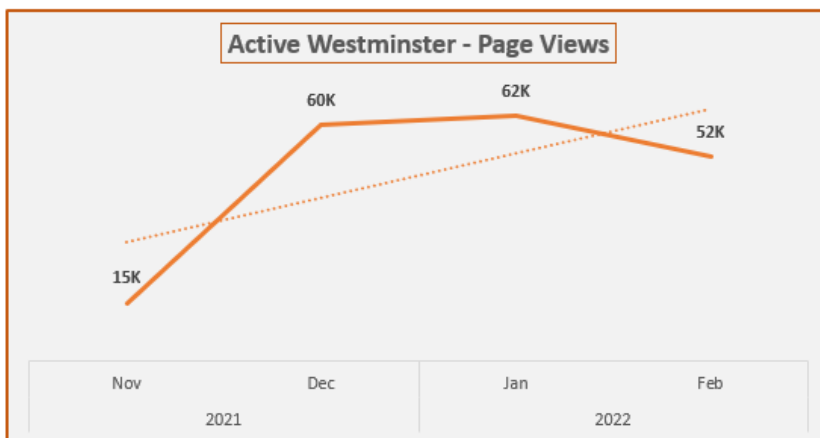


This traffic does not include visits to microsites and it is difficult to measure customer journeys across multiple sites. It is also not possible to measure traffic on some microsites.

The City Save microsite was migrated to westminster.gov.uk in January 2022. You can see the corresponding uplift in traffic on the chart below (and also above)



The Active Westminster website will be migrated in 2022.



4. Website strategy

A strategy for westminster.gov.uk was created to help govern the website. The strategy covers what the website is for, who it is for, and how success is measured.

4.1 What is westminster.gov.uk for

Westminster.gov.uk is designed to:

- Provide accurate and timely information and advice that is useful to our customers
- Deliver online services that benefit our customers
- Encourage action to fulfil strategic objectives e.g. engage digitally, self-serve, work for us
- Clearly explain the role of the council and the services we provide
- Demonstrate the impact on the City and its residents, of policy, services and activity
- Fulfil our statutory obligations e.g. transparency, governance, democracy.

4.2 Who is westminster.gov.uk for

The primary audience by far for westminster.gov.uk are Westminster residents. This is a hugely diverse audience. To meet their needs, westminster.gov.uk must always be simple to use by everyone and accessible to all. Businesses are the secondary audience and there are other important, but much smaller audiences including:

- Visitors
- Media
- Professional audiences seeking information
- Partners and Councils
- Staff and elected officials

Some specific services and campaigns will identify more specific audiences (age, location, occupation). It is important to meet the needs of these specific audiences as well.

4.3 What should westminster.gov.uk do (and not do)

Westminster.gov.uk should only provide information and services that our customers can reasonably expect the council to be responsible for. If another source or service can best meet customer needs, we can signpost and link to it. Westminster.gov.uk should be the home for all content and services (rather than microsites) unless there is compelling evidence that doing so would be detrimental to the customer.

We should have the capability to quickly signpost users to services associated with the council but not delivered on westminster.gov.uk e.g. other central and local government services as well as charity, education and partner services.

Westminster.gov.uk should not contain content or services that do not meet a customer need or fulfil a statutory requirement, nor should it contain content or services that are already provided by an appropriate alternative source.

4.4 How do we measure success

A number of new measures have been introduced to measure the success of the website. These include:

- Compliance with Government Service Standard - New online services will be assessed against the Government Service Standard
- Accessibility - Compliance with current Web Content Accessibility Guidelines and laws.
- Microsite consolidation - Microsites that move to westminster.gov.uk have higher utilisation and engagement and lower costs

In addition, we will shortly be introducing measures that can be validated with users as we move forward:

- Task completion rate - 75% of users should be able to complete tasks successfully, unaided, first time (tasks include both information needs and online transactions).
- Net Promoter Score - 75% of users rate westminster.gov.uk as 30 or higher (great or excellent) on the Net Promoter Scale (NPS)

To deliver this strategy, we are adopting a continuous improvement approach, making small changes at pace. In addition, we will identify areas where we can innovate or apply best practice to drive improvements and create blueprints for exemplar services.

5. Continuous improvement

As with all websites, we must keep improving westminster.gov.uk in line with our changing understanding of user needs and business objectives.

5.1 Mystery Shopping

In December 2021, an online mystery shopping exercise was conducted. Usability tests were carried out with 40 London-based individuals. Customers were asked to attempt a range of tasks on our website, using their own computer or phone.

For this initial round, tasks were chosen from a range of services areas and service types to provide broad coverage across the website. Services included were:

- Adult Social Care - Find out about social care assessments
- Libraries & Leisure - Find a specific book & Book baby rhyme time
- Children & Families - Find out about free childcare
- Births Deaths & Marriages - Find out citizenship ceremony costs and guest numbers, Replacement birth certificate costs and delivery times
- Parking - Find blue badge parking in a specific location, Find out about skip licences in residents parking bays
- Council tax - Find out a council tax band and cost
- Democracy - Find your councillor and find out what they do
- Transport & Streets - Report a missing manhole cover

The tests were recorded and analysed to produce a list of recommendations. Example recommendations included adjustments to the navigation and menus, amendments to the site search, minimising journeys to microsites, Improving the layout of numerical information e.g. tables. Some layout changes to provide key information nearer the top were also recommended as well as changing the names of some links to better reflect user expectations. Other content changes and reducing the number of choices/links on some services pages to make it easier for users to find the most relevant links were also included.

Online mystery shopping is going to be a regular activity, with a further round of testing due to be conducted in early March 2022. As this process matures, specific measures we are able to introduce use-validated measures to assess website performance against the website strategy.

Measures will include:

- Task completion – did the customer find and understand the information or complete the transaction.
- Time taken – elapsed time can be a useful indicator of how easy a task is to complete. Here, we will be capturing it in order to establish a baseline, with the aim being to reduce average times by making tasks easier.
- Net Promoter Score (NPS) - customers will be surveyed after attempting tasks using a Likert scale (agree/disagree) to provide a qualitative measure of customer experience.

This will provide both quantitative and qualitative measures of performance in line with our website strategy.

5.2 Personalisation

Modern day websites exceed user expectations by offering a personalised experience which is tailored to their needs. By implementing personalisation we can offer users a holistic and integrated service that not only meets, but also exceeds their needs.

Personalisation creates an opportunity to build trust between the council and our service users. This is true especially where the increase in digital services can sometimes be viewed as less human and personal. Our services must, as a priority, work for the user and it is therefore imperative to be cautious and use technology responsibly – to build trust and make sure users feel safe in their online interactions.

We are exploring two methods of personalisation, implicit and explicit personalisation.

Explicit personalisation is where we know who the user is. Usually, this is because they are logged in to the website e.g. using their MyWestminster account.

Implicit personalisation is where we don't know exactly who the user is, so we make assumptions about them based on the information available e.g. pages visited, time on site, search terms used etc..

Both methods use information about the user to tailor the services offered.

5.2.1 Implicit personalisation

We are currently developing a simple proof of concept, designed to test our technology and to provide a customer experience that we can learn from.

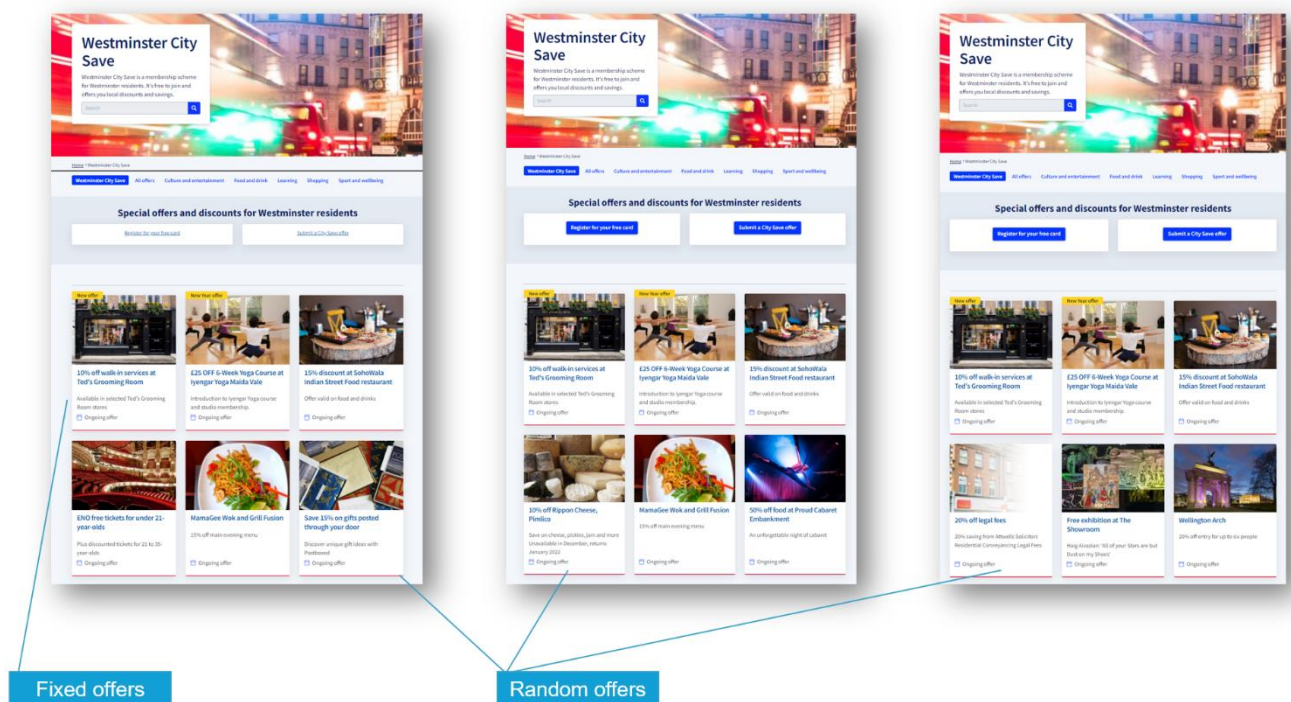
We have recently closed the City Save microsite and this is now hosted on westminster.gov.uk. We are using City Save for this proof of concept, with the underlying technology being re-usable across westminster.gov.uk. For this proof of concept we are introducing dynamic content, so that the offers on the page

refresh with each visit to the page. The premise is that visitors to the City Save page are interested in money-saving offers, and the greater variety we can showcase without additional effort from the user, the greater the chance of the user finding an offer that meets their needs.

Once live, we will monitor the effectiveness with a view to measure and understand if more offers are viewed than the previous, static version.

Currently, the level of personalisation is defined only by the page the user visits. In future, we can go further, by understanding more of the users' attributes to offer them something even more personal e.g. offers that are near their current location. This is next level of maturity to explore if this initial concept is successful. If our ambition is to fully exploit implicit personalisation, then further investment in additional software and development would be required.

City Save Personalisation



5.2.2 Explicit personalisation

Whilst implicit personalisation is already being piloted, explicit personalisation is just starting to be explored. As part of the upcoming phases of the MyWestminster and Digital Card project, we are defining the scope for explicit personalisation.

There is great potential to improve our service to customers. A possible use case could be:

A parent registers a birth and opts in to receive emails and to allow re-use of their data for other services. We are then able to send them emails about our services (and partner services) relevant to a parent with a young child e.g. childcare, nurseries and library events. Over time, we can offer them early years services,

leisure activities, City Save offers, then school admissions, free school meals and more. We can also offer complementary or promotional services e.g. re-usable nappies, community groups, sustainable travel. Not only can we promote these services, but when the user consumes that service we can re-use their data, making it very convenient for the customer. We can also make use of the joined-up data in new ways e.g. fraud detection or safeguarding and prevention.

This is just one scenario, but the principles apply across many services. Through the eyes of the user, the principles can be:

- Inform me about relevant services and offers
- Let me know about services, when I need to know about them
- Make it easy for me to sign-up to new services
- Give me control and visibility of how my data is used

The potential benefits to the customer are many, and we intend to work towards this. We are already thinking about the technical architecture, processes and controls that need to underpin this way of working.

There are substantial technical dependencies, including establishing mechanisms to create and manage a single customer record.

There is also a need to map the range of user personas, and their journeys through our services over their lifetime as a customer. Whilst the challenge is great, the benefits are clearly worthwhile.

5.3 Roadmap

Mystery shopping is rapidly becoming a key tool for improving the website and personalisation will be an opportunity to significantly add value. These activities do not stand alone but form part of a wider roadmap:

User Centred Design

- Government Service Standard – the first new service has passed an assessment
- Recruiting a customer testing pool to ensure availability of real users with which to conduct research and testing
- Mystery shopping

Forms

- Developing a strategic approach to forms platforms and appropriate uses and improving design consistency

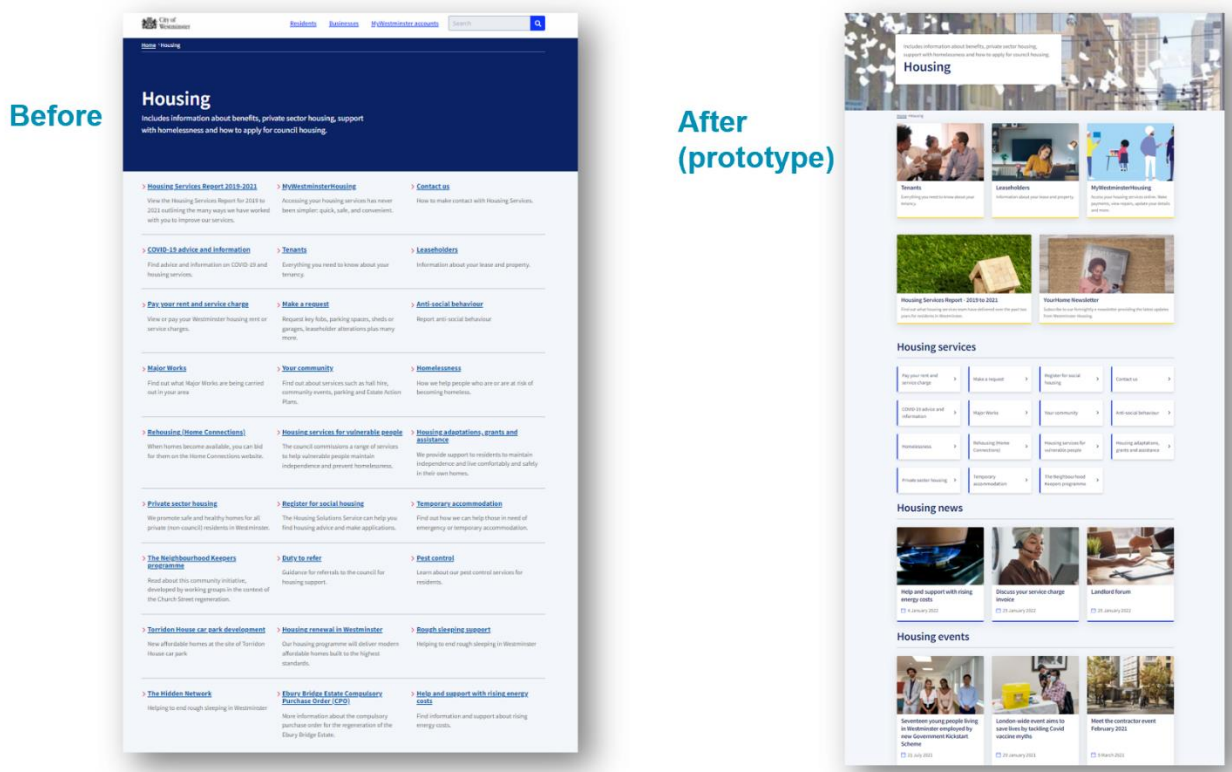
Features and technical improvements

- Search improvements – better results for popular search terms
- Future-proofing the underlying technology, improving security and creating the opportunity for personalisation
- Personalisation

Design (UI/UX)

- Improvements being made to layout and appearance, based on recommendations from mystery shopping
- Content guidance is being updated to make sure new transactional services use a human and friendly tone and voice

Example of proposed design changes



Microsites and apps

- Reducing the number of microsites to improve customer journeys
- Discovery exercise to assess viability of a MyWestminster and Digital Card smartphone app

Accessibility

- Accessibility processes are being improved to ensure appropriate assurance is in place to ensure services work for everyone
- Procuring expert support

Performance measures and analytics

- Web page feedback tool added to most pages to quickly and simply capture customer feedback
- Improvements to our analytics reporting

The table below illustrates the indicative timeline for the above activities.

Workstream	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	
1 – User Centred Design	Online Mystery Shopping (ongoing)								
		Service Assessments (ongoing)				Setup customer testing pool			
2 – Forms					Tech approach		Process		UX dev
3 – Features and technology	Search		Search	Drupal 9			Explicit personalisation		
	Content Guidance			Personalisation pilot		Design system updates			
5 – Microsites and apps	Process / Strategy			MWDC App discovery		Migration (12 months)			
6 – Accessibility	Process improvements					Call-off contract partnership in place			
7 – Performance and analytics	Page feedback		Analytics review						

6. Innovation

Our ambition is to design online experiences to meet our customers needs. Our website is a critical part of this online customer experience, and we want it to be simple to use and become the preferred option for customers to find information and services. We want our website to be 'so good that our customers prefer to use it', consistently.

However, our website is part of a wider digital ecosystem. Whilst the majority of our content and information is on westmsinter.gov.uk, some is on microsites, but that number is reducing, allowing us greater control of the customer experience. When it comes to transactional services, our digital ecosystem is much more complex. Transactions are provided by numerous 3rd party systems and platforms, to varying degrees of success. Sometimes the customer journey can be rather fragmented, making it difficult to meet ours and our customers' expectations.

Increasingly, we are taking control of our online experience, through innovative initiatives such as mystery shopping and personalisation. Through the MyWestminster and Digital Card project, we take even more control over the online experience and make things simpler, more intuitive and exceed our customers' expectations.

It isn't just innovative ideas and services though. We are also adopting best-in-class practices and processes such as Government Service Standard assessments to provide quality assurance and expert accessibility services to ensure no one is disadvantaged. We are also changing the way we work to across our teams to provide the right levels of user focus, service design and agile service delivery.

The council provides a vast range of services, underpinned by numerous technology solutions. This makes it difficult to do everything at once. Consequently, this year we will be looking to take our combination of best practice and innovation to help us establish our digital ecosystem and understand the blueprint for great online services going forward.

7. Next steps

The City Save personalisation pilot will launch at the end of February and, if successful, this feature will be rolled out to other suitable services. We will then look to improve the capability to enable more advanced features.

As we develop our online experience roadmap in the coming months (Apr – Jun), we will look to:

- Define the technical architecture for explicit personalisation
- Identify an exemplar service that can become the blueprint for future services (this service will likely take advantage of explicit personalisation)

And, of course, we will continue to improve our website based on our understanding of our customers' needs and our business objectives.

8. Addendum - MyWestminster and Digital Card Update

In 2018 a task group was established to investigate the barriers to cultural engagement to investigating the benefits of the smart card scheme that had already been established in other local council services and how Westminster could benefit from a digital card scheme. Additionally, in 2019, analysis conducted by CED, revealed that WCC's online offerings are managed by 43 systems and microsites of which 15, require users to log in. This creates inconsistent designs, technical debt, disconnected journeys, and duplicate data entry that contribute to poor user experience.

Accelerated by the pandemic, the need and demand for seamless, intuitive, and digital services that can protect vulnerable residents and supporting local businesses became critical. MyWestminster and Digital Card project originally started in early 2020, with a discovery phase.

As part of the commitment, the Council aimed to introduce cutting edge technology through a new resident portal via MyWestminster thereby reducing multiple logins, create seamless user experiences and providing a digital card.

Following an evaluation, Netcompany was chosen to build both the digital card offering and the associated frictionless enrolment capability. It was vital that the chosen technology solution aligned with the Councils desire to adopt a new vision of approach, with capabilities to roll out reusable components to other parties in the future. Providing the (reusable) core building blocks for all future digital projects – ensuring that the thousands of manual transactions processed annually by the Council across all services could become digitalised using this investment and benefit from savings now and in the future.

The aim of the digital card is to:

- Protect vulnerable users by facilitating access to local services, benefits, and discounts
- Protect local businesses through increasing resident's purchasing power (e.g., Westminster City Save)
- Increase social inclusivity by allowing vulnerable groups, to be able to gain non-stigmatised access to services they might not otherwise use, such as discounted leisure activities or peer-to-peer connection with local volunteers
- Minimise face-to-face and call centre administration by allowing users to register once to use multiple services (e.g., register at a library and then be able to use city save or leisure services in later iterations)

As set out in our customer experience and digital strategy, as a flagship Council we are committed to providing an intelligent, intuitive an exceptional experience for accessing all council services through a single-entry point. Both improving the experience for communities and offering a digital for all solution that offers value and becomes the preferential choice for communities.

This product is designed to support:

- Westminster's City for All commitment to ensure customers choose to use our digital services and to design our services to meet customer needs and to be as inclusive to all residents as possible
- The Customer Experience and Digital Strategy commitment to transform the way our customers interact with the council making it easy for them to find the information and services they need to improve their lives.
- Deliver a seamless user experience for our borough residents, streamlining multiple physical cards, to one digital/smart card solution for both iOS and Android devices. Using existing customer data, it was important integrity is maintained, and the project added value in building this as part of the long-term master data: golden record vision.

We are investing not only in a new process but also a new technology and approach. WCC is committed to is delivering a truly customer focused platform, designed for mobile from the ground up so that users get the best online experience.

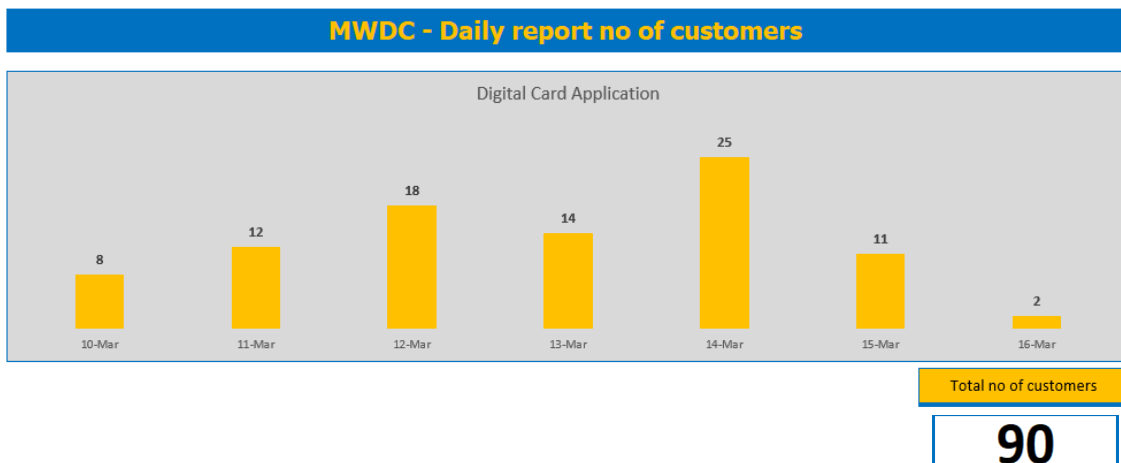
The MyWestminster portal successfully launched on the 10th March 2022 and is a single digital space for residents who will only need to register their details once to then gain access to multitude of services including libraries and City Save. The portal prevents residents from having to continuously prove their identity to gain access to different services and save vital time as residents will not need to physically visit a location to collect their membership card.

Once details are registered, residents can download a digital card and save it in their Apple Wallet or Google Pay. This will increase digital footprint. For residents who do not have a smart phone, they can continue to use their physical cards, however most residents will be encouraged to transfer their details to the digital platform.

MyWestminster portal will initially offer library and City Save services. Other WCC services such as access to Housing, Adult Social care and leisure centres will be added at later dates.

The MyWestminster portal is a key part of the Smart Cities roll out and it is an essential project to showcase the exciting elements that bring residents and technology together. The MyWestminster portal will be presented as a new Smart City initiative that complements its bigger picture, so residents understand that MyWestminster portal is not a stand-alone project. This is especially important given the wide spectrum of Smart City's activities including the Christmas Elves AR experience and air quality monitors.

Daily MyWestminster and Digital card registrations since 10th March launch (correct as of 10:00 16/3/2022)



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



Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Date:	29 th March 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2022/23 Work Programme
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Cabinet Member Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for City Management and Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Michael Edley medley@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1. This report asks committee members to consider those items unallocated in 2021/22 (Appendix 1) to recommend for inclusion in the work programme in the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

2. Meeting dates for the 2022/2023 year

- 2.1 The Committee is advised that the scheduled meeting dates for the 2022/2023 year are:
 - 20th June 2022
 - 28th September 2022
 - 16th November 2022
 - 19th January 2023
 - 22nd March 2023

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Artemis Kassi at
akassi@westminster.gov.uk

Appendix A: Work Programme

Appendix B: Terms of Reference

Appendix A. Possible topics to carry forward to 2022/2023

Finance, Smart City and City Management (FSCCM) Policy and Scrutiny Committee

UNALLOCATED ITEMS in 2021/22 TO BE CONSIDERED FOR NEXT MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23			
Agenda Item	Reasons & objective for item	Represented by	Notes
Temporary Traffic Closures		Kevin Goad (Director of City Highways)	
North Westminster Floods	To receive an update on the Thames Water Review of the North Westminster Floods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment & City) Phil Robson (Head of Operations, City Highways) 	Proposed for June
Air Quality Monitoring	A report that sets out where we are, the early findings of the consultants and what these might mean in terms of monitoring of and solutions to air quality issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claire Parsons (Project Manager (CleanTech City Lead, Smart Cities Programme)) David Wilkins (Head of Digital Space) 	Proposed for June Meeting
Post COVID-19 Financial Recovery	To discuss the financial recovery of the borough and the City Council's actions and roles in supporting it		
MyWestminster Digital Card	To review and discuss the project management of the <i>MyWestminster</i> Digital Card concept, as well as its attached financial implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah Williams (Head of Customer Experience and Digital, Customer Engagement) Aruj Haider (Chief Digital and Innovation Officer, Customer Engagement) 	•

Agenda Item	Reasons & objective for item	Represented by	Notes
Biodiversity and ecology of Westminster	To review whether sufficient efforts being taken to conserve tree, plant and animal habitat in Westminster, and to examine existing or future policies to support the expansion of biodiversity		Note from John Ceridwen: Practically, strategic greening work is planned to have quite a lot of activity happening later this year – including quite a detailed study that would be really interesting for the committee to look at which is commissioning a study of all our open spaces (Green Infrastructure Study) that we have committed to do under the City Plan adoption. Part of this will be looking at which areas of the city are deficient in green space and what we could potentially do about that to ensure everyone has access to high quality green spaces and I think the committee could be told about this happening and that the opportunity to look at it would be more worthwhile once we have these maps and information and the public health impacts around that which is something we have started to talk to them about linking together.
Resident focus and inclusivity in Smart City	To review the Smart City initiative and scrutinise its focus on delivering value and improved lives for residents, as well as interrogating the accessibility of service upgrades or new technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhoda Philips (Digital Inclusion and Talent Lead, Customer Engagement) • Becky Chapman (Digital Innovation Consultant, Customer Engagement) • Sarah Williams (Head of Customer Experience and Digital, Customer Engagement) • Aruj Haider (Chief Digital and Innovation Officer, Customer Engagement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Appendix B. Terms of Reference: Finance, Smart City and City Management (FSCCM) Policy and Scrutiny Committee

COMPOSITION

Eight (8) Members of the Council (five Majority Party Members and three Minority Party Members, but shall not include a Member of the Cabinet.

TERMS OF REFERENCE (as per the Constitution, 15th February 2021)

- (a) To carry out the Policy and Scrutiny functions, as set out in Article 6 of the Constitution, in respect of matters relating to all those duties within the terms of reference of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Smart City and the Cabinet Member for City Management.
- (b) To carry out the Policy and Scrutiny function in respect of matters within the remit of the Council's non-executive Committees and Sub-Committees, that are within the broad remit of the Committee, in accordance with paragraph 13(a) of the Policy and Scrutiny procedure rules.
- (c) Matters, within the broad remit of the Cabinet Members referred to in (a) above, which are the responsibility of external agencies.
- (d) Any other matter allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.
- (e) To have the power to establish ad hoc or Standing Sub-Committees as Task Groups to carry out the Scrutiny of functions within these terms of reference.
- (f) To scrutinise the duties of the Lead Members which fall within the remit of the Committee or as otherwise allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.
- (g) To scrutinise any Bi-borough proposals which impact on service areas that fall within the Committee's terms of reference.
- (h) To oversee any issues relating to Performance that fall within the Committee's terms of reference.
- (i) To have the power to scrutinise those partner organisations that are relevant to the remit of the Committee.
- (j) To consider any Councillor Calls for Action, referred by a Ward Member to the Committee

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