



City of Westminster

Title:

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Date:

Monday 10th May, 2021

Time:

7.00 pm

Venue:

This will be a virtual meeting

Members:

Councillors:

Andrew Smith (Chairman)
Antonia Cox
Elizabeth Hitchcock
Ian Rowley

Barbara Arzymanow
Guthrie McKie
Matt Noble
Hamza Taouzzale

In line with legislation and continuing Covid-19 precautions, Committee members and officers will attend this meeting virtually.

[Link to live meeting](#)



Members of the public and press are invited to attend virtually and listen to the discussion of Part I of the Agenda



An Induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Artemis Kassi (akassi@westminster.gov.uk).

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. 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 Committee and Governance Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

(Pages 5 - 8)

To agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15th March 2021.

4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES

(Pages 9 - 12)

Councillor David Harvey, the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, to provide a verbal update to the Committee on current and forthcoming issues in his portfolio and to answer questions from Members.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION

(Pages 13 - 18)

Councillor Heather Acton, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration, to provide a verbal update to the Committee on current and forthcoming issues in her portfolio.

6. REPORT OF THE METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE

(Pages 19 - 38)

To receive an update report by the Metropolitan Police Service on policing in Westminster.

7. REPORT ON THE WARD BUDGET PROGRAMME

(Pages 39 - 64)

To receive a report on the reform of the Ward Budget Programme.

8. WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

(Pages 65 - 68)

To discuss the Committee's work programme for the coming municipal year.

Stuart Love
Chief Executive
30 April 2021

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy & Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 15 March 2020**.

Members Present: Councillors Andrew Smith (Chairman), Barbara Arzymanow, Antonia Cox, Paul Dimoldenberg, Elizabeth Hitchcock, Aicha Less, Pancho Lewis, Ian Rowley

Also Present: Councillor David Harvey (Cabinet Member for Housing Services), Councillor Heather Acton (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing), James Green (Director of Development) and Hannah Nobel (Senior Asset Development Manager)

Expert Witness: Richard Valentine-Selsey (Associate Director, Research Analyst) at Savills

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 No apologies were received.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES

3.1 Councillor David Harvey (Cabinet Member for Housing Services), provided a briefing on key issues within his portfolio. The committee received the update and held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Members noted that access to outdoor space is important and asked about what can be done to improve access on some estates. They heard that the council could look more aggressively at concrete spaces and consider whether these spaces could be transitioned into garden and or park area.
- Members asked about the Housing Services call centre satisfaction statistics in relation to repairs. Cllr Harvey agreed to share more information on the statistics

for both the call centre stats that relate to how quickly a call is picked up and logged and also stats around the repair itself.

- Members asked about anti-social behaviour on council estates. They heard the aim of the council's new plan is to ensure that those people who are causing the most trouble were aware that going forward it will be easier for the council to move them on.
- Members discussed social housing and the challenges around providing affordable housing in central London with Cllr Harvey.

4. CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION

4.1 Councillor Heather Acton (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration) provided an update on key issues within her portfolio. The Committee received the update and held detailed discussions on the following topics:

- Members asked how the council would continue to connect and foster people's involvement in the voluntary sector. They heard there will likely be a need for Westminster Connects going forward as a link between the council and the voluntary sector.
- Members heard that the new plan for anti-social behaviour aims to ensure that it is addressed in a seamless way across the council and in cases where the police are involved. Currently the system has different strands which means it is sometimes not clear to residents where they need to go to seek help.
- Members asked about the new model for City Inspectors. They heard the previous model caused confusion. Going forward every ward will be getting a brief report from its inspector detailing what has happened in the ward over the previous fortnight.
- Members asked for more information on the Ebury development and whether the plan was to have separate blocks for leasehold house and social rented houses. Members heard that this was not the case and there would not be separate blocks for separate tenures.
- Members asked about the carbon neutral strategy for its regeneration developments. They heard that meeting the council's carbon targets will present challenges. Across all the builds the council is trying to reach carbon zero where possible.
- Members asked whether there would be an increase in service charges on the newly regenerated estates. They heard service charges will be kept to an effective minimum. However, the charge must cover the cost of maintaining and servicing the buildings.

- Members noted that it would be a good idea to have a more fulsome session on policing in the borough at an upcoming meeting.

5. REGENERATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- 5.1 Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Growth Planning and Housing introduced the report. The Committee also heard from Hannah Nobel (Director of Corporate Property), James Green (Director of Development) and expert witness Richard Valentine-Selsey (Associate Director, Research Analyst) at Savills. The committee discussed the following:
- Members asked about the mechanics behind why house prices had stayed stable, but rents had fallen due to the pandemic. Central London was hit hard by the fall in international students and tourism. This lead some housing stocking entering the wider private rented sector market which increased overall supply. This is something that is expected to rebalance over the first half of 2021.
 - Members heard about the sales strategy for its schemes. They heard that the council reviews the strategy for each scheme at regular intervals, including whether its appropriate for the units to be on the market or whether they could become rentals.
 - Members noted that there was risk across the regeneration schemes because of delays caused by the pandemic. Members asked what the scale of this risk was, for example how many sites were behind schedule. They heard there had been a loss of productivity of about 20%-25% over the last 12 months. The construction industry had to evolve and create new working practices in light of the pandemic. On a positive note, the construction industry has been incredibly productive over the pandemic in comparison to other industries. Members noted it would be sensible to return to this the topic of risk and slippage across the regeneration schemes later in the year.
 - Members expressed concern about foreign buyers being able to purchase units in the Council's schemes. They argued this contributed to pushing up property prices across the borough which made providing affordable housing more challenging and created more barriers for lower income families and first home buyers. Some members also expressed concern that foreign capital might be coming from countries without free enterprise systems which ultimately distorted the market. Officers commented that only one of the schemes (Luton Street) had had an overseas marketing strategy and most of the schemes they were marketed domestically. They also commented that young families have been purchasing units as owner occupiers purchasing the units in a number of the schemes.

6 2020/21 WORK PROGRAMME

6.1 The committee suggested the following topics for the Work Programme:

- Policing in the borough
- Rough sleeping
- Greening of social housing

The Meeting ended at 9:22pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE: _____



Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Monday 10 May 2021

Report Of: Councillor David Harvey

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing

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

1 Summary

As per the new agreed Cabinet Member report structure, this update provides highlights on my City for All priorities which drive the medium-term objectives of the portfolio, plus areas of current focus in the housing portfolio and pertinent performance information. Since the last Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee, I have formally approved the following key decisions:

- Issue of the Annual Review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), Rent and Associated HRA Charges 2021/22.

2 City for All – Housing Priorities

Cleaner and Greener

2.1 Leverage Energy Efficiency Measures in Housing

Further grant funding of £270k has been secured. This is in addition to the £145k of grant funding secured for E rated properties to benefit from internal wall insulation and heating upgrades. Work to reduce consumption/decarbonise the stock includes enhanced insulation and replacing traditional boilers with air source heat pumps. Options to off-set consumption include photovoltaic panels. The various technologies are planned to be trialled over the next 18 months so that the impact can be better modelled.

Vibrant Communities

2.2 Develop A New Approach For Major Works In Our Buildings

The major works delivery process is under review and will result in a reduction of the process and improvements in the accuracy of indicative leaseholder bills. This year a programme management approach has been put in place to oversee delivery of the capital investment programme. A new format is being developed for monthly project updates beginning at the start of the project. This will standardise performance management across projects as they move through milestones and will be included on the project webpages for residents.

2.3 Supporting Vulnerable Residents

Reviews of the floating support contract and support arrangements for care leavers are underway to ensure that service users get the help they need to sustain their tenancies. The housing service is working with partners to establish a multi-agency framework to deal with mental health issues. A new approach involving residents in resolving anti-social behaviour (ASB) through a case review panel is being developed and will be piloted later this year. Work towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation is progressing. This is an in-depth piece of work expected to take a year to complete.

2.4 Redesign of Service Model Through Shared Space and Maximising the Use of Public Buildings

The housing service is designing a project to improve wellbeing and community engagement in ensuring community assets are used to their full potential. The project will deliver a series of interventions to residents of Churchill Gardens in partnership with other services to create a more engaged, resilient community. The pilot will seek to strengthen partnerships, co-ordinate council and community services with better use of local assets. The project has commenced with a survey of residents at Churchill Gardens and will include feedback on use of the community hall and outdoor spaces.

2.5 Resident Engagement

A consultation pack for residents on proposals for changes to involvement arrangements has been designed with input from key stakeholders. The formal consultation will take place between 26 April and 21 May 2021. To maximise participation, we will write to all residents and offer a range of opportunities (post, online, phone and webinars) for them to provide their feedback.

Smart Cities

2.6 Trial Smart Homes Technologies

The housing service is exploring the use of technology in homes and on estates with the intention to test a range of technology through small pilots to determine the benefits that may be delivered by roll-out across the city. Trialling of a range of sensors to detect water leaks is due to commence in May 2021.

2.7 Facilitating Broadband Connections

The project is in delivery phase and the target to achieve 80% of homes with access to full fibre has been achieved.

3 Areas of Focus

3.1 Major Works Update

Further to the recent Government announcements, our Partners have reviewed their COVID-19 processes and procedures to ensure that they are in line with the latest version of the Construction Leadership Councils – site operating procedures. The delivery of Major Works is progressing well and in particular at Little Venice Towers,

where the External Wall Insulation to all the 6 blocks is now completed. We have reviewed our 5-year capital programme, which has received confirmation and discussions are taking place with our contractors.

3.2 ASB on Housing Estates

In January 2021 we implemented a new approach to ASB enforcement. The first change is to make more use of Notices of Seeking Possession where there has been a breach of tenancy agreement. The second change is to make more use of Community Protection Notices to tackle persistent ASB. The ASB team have received additional training in relation to the agreed referral pathways. The ASB team have made three referrals to Public Protection and Licencing to serve CPN warnings and two referrals to the Police to serve CPN warnings.

3.3 Housing Contact Centre

Our new digital system 8x8 has been very successful since it's full implementation in March. New customer channels such as webchat/SMS/Social have recently been included, as well as speech analytics and the ability to take direct payments.

3.4 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

In 2021 we have received **1519** homelessness applications to date in comparison to 2050 over the same period in 2019/20. Reasons for the lower figures include the freeze on evictions from private landlords. As of March 2021, there are **2,716 households** in Temporary Accommodation and there are no families in non-self-contained accommodation. We continue to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic particularly in responding to the need of Rough Sleepers. In line with new government funding and priorities we will be looking into opportunities focused on the needs of the supported accommodation pathway.

4 Performance Updates

Housing Contact Centre

- 4.1** A total of **16,826** calls were received in February with **67%** of calls resolved on the first contact. **90%** of residents were satisfied with their call handling. Both targets are exceeding the minimum standards for the service.

Satisfaction with Repairs Service

- 4.2** Overall tenant satisfaction with repairs has remained steady at **79%** for February 2021. **76%** of repairs in this period were completed on the first visit.

Overall Satisfaction of Housing Services

- 4.3** Tenant satisfaction that WCC provides a safe and secure home remains steady at **73%** for tenants and **75%** for leaseholders in February.

- 4.4** Satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas is at **84%** for tenants and **71%** for leaseholders, while satisfaction with grounds maintenance is above target at **86%** for tenants and **85%** for leaseholders.

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Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Monday 10 May 2021
Report Of:	Councillor Heather Acton
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration
Report Author and Contact Details:	<p>Chloe Baker cbaker@westminster.gov.uk Ph: 07890 380122</p>

1 City for All – Communities and Regeneration Priorities

Vibrant Communities

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy

- 1.1 We are in the early stages of developing a new Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) strategy to make it clear how we and our partners address ASB across the borough. The aim is to publish the strategy in late Autumn 2021, having consulted on it, including with this committee. However, work has already commenced to examine areas that have been highlighted as being potential gaps or duplication in our ASB approach including:
- A cross agency Westminster City Council (WCC) and Metropolitan Police Service Youth Early Intervention Scheme, streamlining with other Youth Intervention provision
 - Developing an approach to mental health and anti-social behaviour (ASB).
 - Developing the capability of WCC caseworkers to address ASB, with additional training. The aim is to improve WCC capacity to pursue ASB and criminal prosecutions.
- 1.2 The strategy will incorporate standardised processes across over 50 agencies within the Westminster ASB partnership, so that ASB cases are handled consistently.

Westminster Connects

- 1.3 Westminster Connects is planning for the next stage of recovery support. Over the next few months, focus will be on how the service will move away from a pandemic response into business as usual and delivering on City for All.
- 1.4 Operationally, significant efforts have been placed on improving COVID-19 vaccination uptake, on completing contact with the newly advised group of shielding residents, on incorporating the track and trace team into the mainstream work of the Public Protection and Licensing department and scoping Voluntary and Community Sector contracts.

Rough Sleeping Commissioning Strategy

- 1.5 The Council continues to assess the longer-term impact of accommodating people previously sleeping on our streets and people at risk of sleeping rough during the pandemic. Current provision must be retained, while future options are developed for post-pandemic services. A commissioning working group is being set up for May 2021 to support the Divisional Head of Housing Needs, Support and Safety. This will develop a Rough Sleeping Commissioning Strategy and review future options for service commissioning. Officers from across the Council and procurement business partners will form part of this group.

Church Street

1.6 Stage 1 of the pre-planning consultation for Church Street Site A closed on 31 March 2021, with over 300 responses. Stage 2 is planned for Summer 2021. 50% affordable housing and the ambition for net zero carbon will be included as part of the planning application.

1.7 Expressions of Interest have been received from 10 operators for the Church Street Triangle Project, all with experience of delivering community focused enterprise spaces. Jan Kattien Architects are developing final designs for the three vacant units and are progressing designs for the public realm.

Ebury Edge

1.8 Businesses at Ebury Edge have reopened following the lifting of non-essential retail lockdown on 12 April 2021. To date, 18 start-up businesses have taken up occupation in the new units on Ebury Bridge Road. Community café, 'Fat Macy's', recently held a COVID-19 compliant 'Easter Grill' and Early Years childcare provider 'Carly's Angels' has taken up occupation in the community centre.

Infill Schemes

1.9 As part of the Infill programme, 6 new social rented homes will complete shortly. These schemes involved conversion of former office space, a former laundry room and undercroft space to provide a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bed homes. For community benefit, these new homes will be offered to eligible residents within the blocks, enabling the Council to address cases of local housing need. Across the Infill programme there are currently 145 on site or at the pre-construction stage. Consultation on further schemes will commence soon.

1.10 Photographs from a recent visit to the near-completed infill sites are included as an appendix at the end of this report.

Cleaner and Greener

Code of Construction Practice (CoCP)

1.11 The Code of Construction Practice has been drafted and will be discussed at an upcoming Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny committee. There will be a six-week public consultation period, in order to consult with the developer community and other stakeholders to ensure their input is fully integrated into the plan.

Air Quality Action Plan

1.12 We are revising some of the actions in the Air Quality Action Plan to reflect the impact of the pandemic. Cross-portfolio discussions will take place to ensure that the plan reflects the full range of steps that can be taken by the Council, including public health measures

Westminster Schools Air Quality Programme

1.13 The council's Schools Clean Air Programme has provided every school with the opportunity for a bespoke Air Quality Audit which recommends measures which will help to mitigate the impact of poor air quality for students and staff at the school. This programme has been supported by environmental consultants WSP who carried out the audits and collated the results. All the schools that participated have now received their audit reports. WSP have collated the findings and the final report and the next steps of the programme will be finalised shortly.

2 Major Decisions

2.1 Since my last report to Committee, I have formally approved the following decisions:

- Luton Street: Request for approval to transfer head lease (CMR)
- HMO Additional Licensing Scheme Recommendation to Full Council (CMR)

3 Areas of Focus

Serious Youth Violence and Gang Activity

3.1 The Council and Metropolitan Police Service have been working closely in preparing for the lifting of COVID-19 lockdown conditions in order to prepare for any potential increase in gang offending. A high visibility policing plan has been put in place, with both BCU and centrally deployed police resources in areas of high risk.

3.2 Work has commenced between Westminster City Council and London Borough of Brent officers and police to ensure maximisation of cooperation required to deal with any cross-border gang issues. The Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU) continues to work with young people either involved in gangs or at risk of involvement to ensure that opportunities are offered in employment, training, education, mental health and family support.

Modern Slavery

3.3 A bi-borough Modern Slavery Strategy has been drafted with RBKC and is due to be published soon.

Rough Sleeping

3.4 The last street count took place on 25 March and 106 rough sleepers were accounted. Whilst only a slight reduction on our January count (108), there is usually a significant increase between January & March counts historically in Westminster. The exceptional number of “move-on” achieved this winter has enabled us to steady the numbers sleeping on our streets. UK nationals have continued to decrease overall.

3.5 Westminster has been shortlisted for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government’s (MHCLG) Changing Futures Programme, a new round of funding that supports adults experiencing multiple disadvantages. The Council’s Expression of Interest was co-produced across Housing, Public Health, Adult and Children’s Social Care, and Public Protection & Licensing, and was co-signed by ten partners from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Work is in process to design systems change for impact on the following groups facing multiple disadvantage:

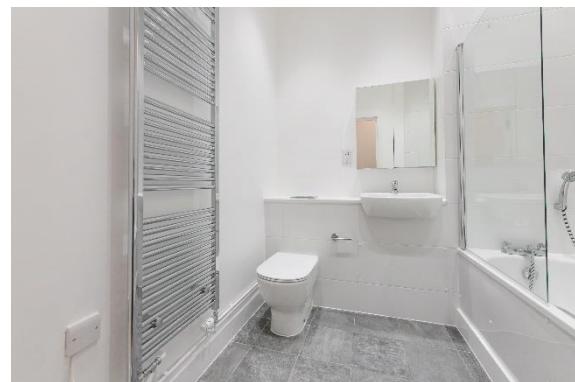
- Rough Sleepers with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse issues
- Violence Against Women and Girls
- Autistic Adults
- LGBTQI+
- Temporary Accommodation

Appendix: Photographs of recent visits to Infill Sites

Edinburgh House, Maida Vale

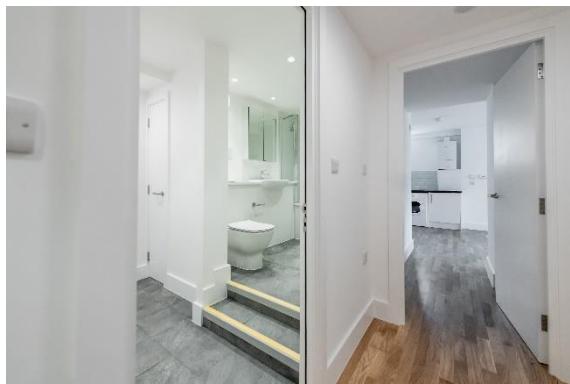


Falkirk House, Maida Vale





John Aird Court, Little Venice

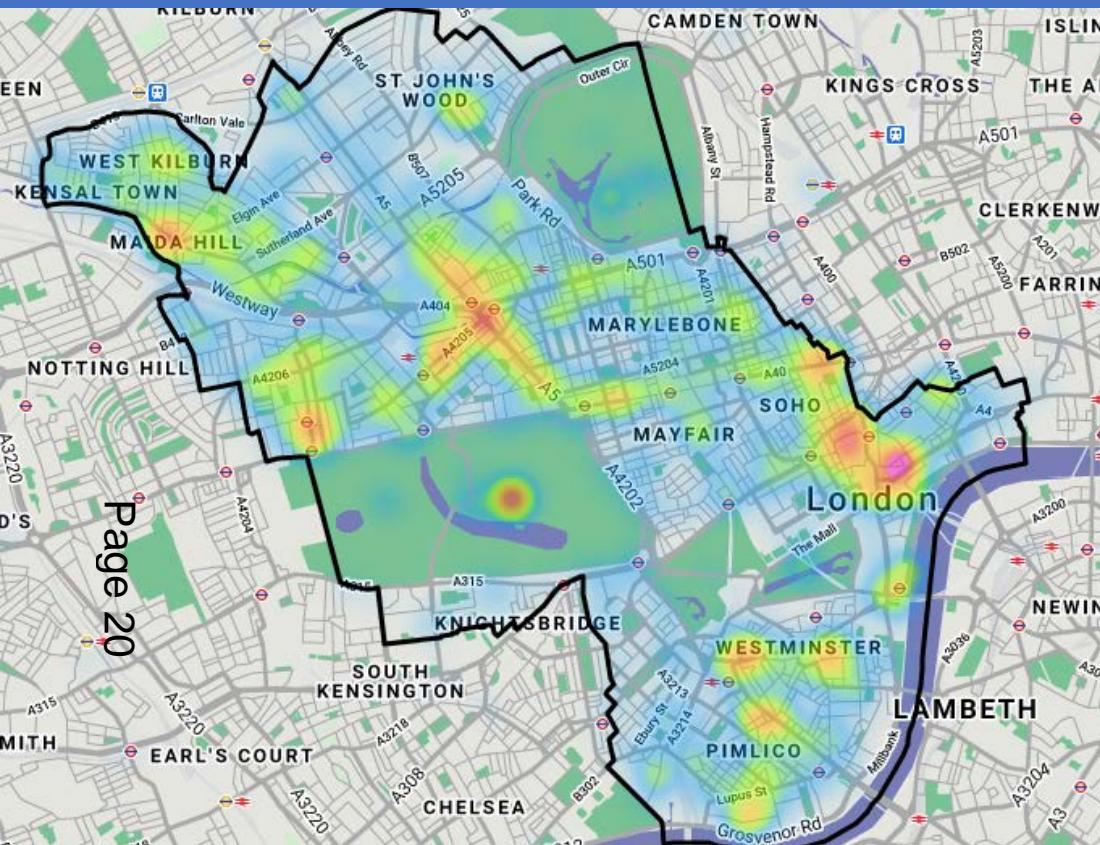


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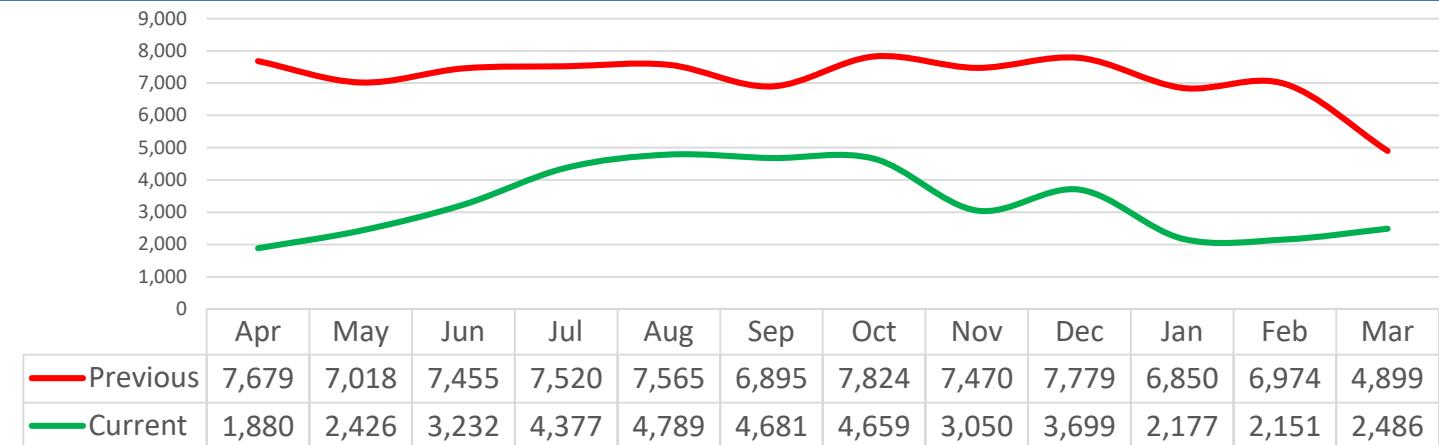


Protective marking	OFFICIAL
FOIA Exemption	Yes
Suitable for publication scheme?	No
Title	Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee
Summary	Assessment of Crime in Westminster
Purpose	Analysis of Performance
Authors	AW Business Support (HQ)
Owner	Metropolitan Police - Central West Neighbourhoods and
Date created	April 2021

Total Notifiable Offences



Top 5 offence/crime types	Count
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	301
Other Accepted Crime - Others - Other Accepted Crime	251
Drugs - Possession Of Drugs	225
Theft and Handling - Other Theft	204
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	197

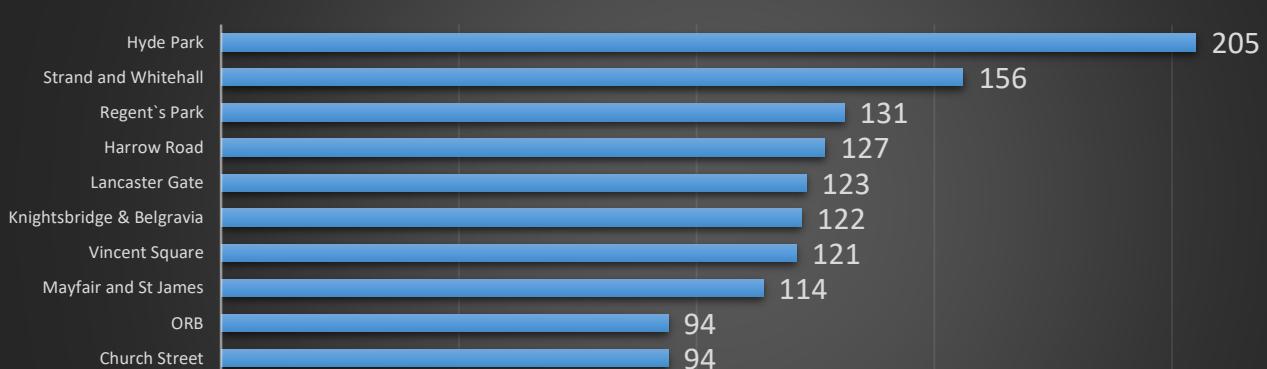


For March there were 2,486 offences, this is a decrease of 49.25% compared to last year's 4,899 offences and an increase of 15.57% compared to February's 2,151 offences. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 39,607 offences, this is a decrease of 53.91% compared to last year's 85,928 offences.

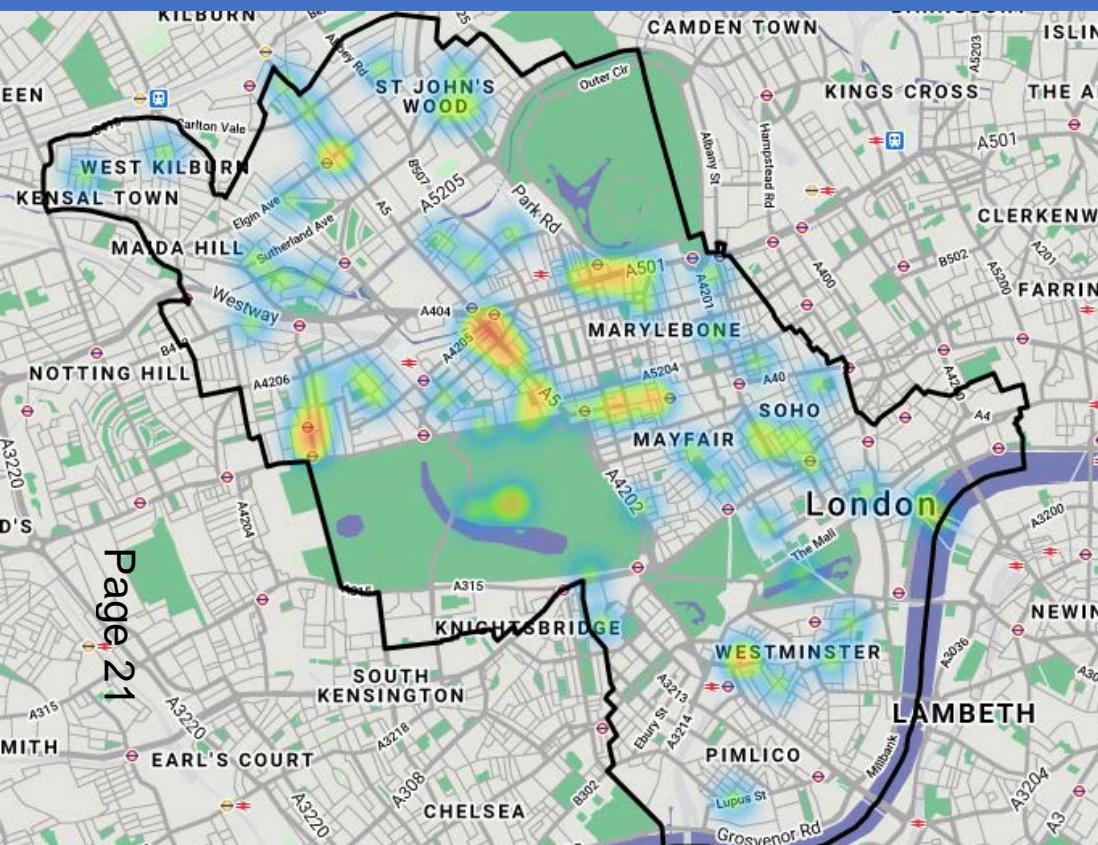
Peak Day & Times

Tuesday (399) between 1400-2100hrs

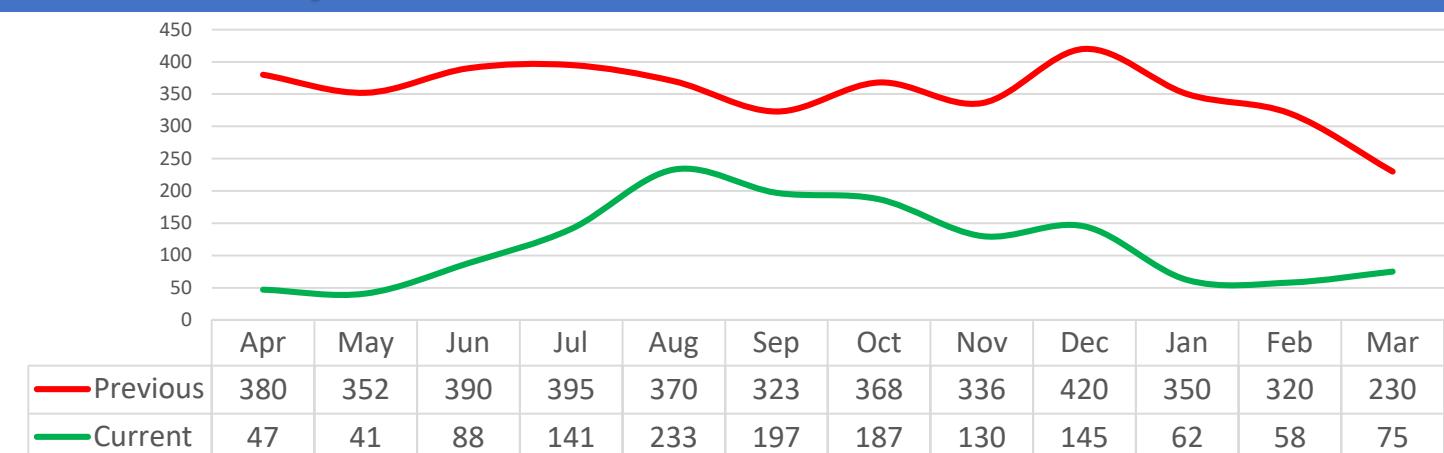
Monday (396) between 1500-1900hrs



Robbery



Top 5 offence/crime types	Count
Robbery - Personal Property	73
Robbery - Business Property	2

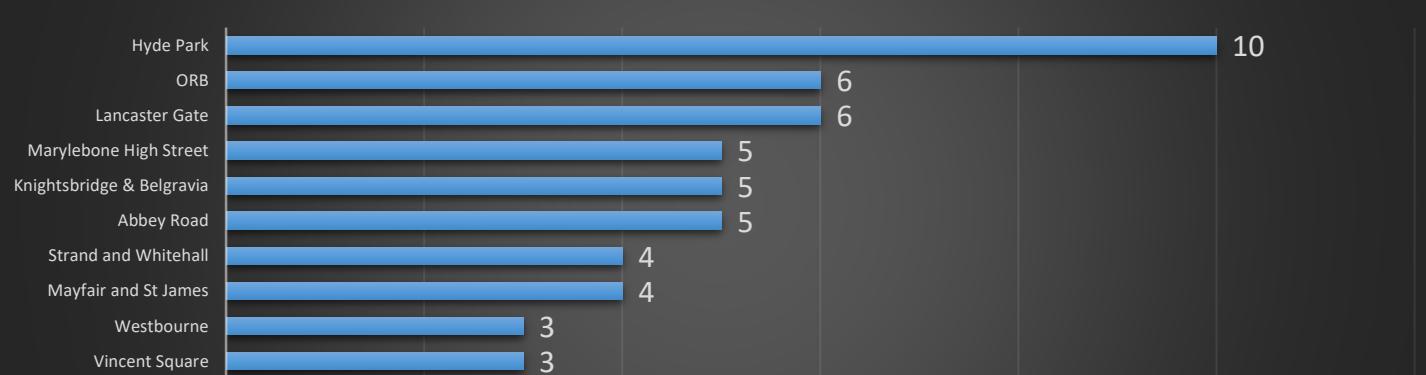


For March there were 75 offences, this is a decrease of 67.39% compared to last year's 230 offences and an increase of 29.31% compared to February's 58 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 1,404 offences, this is a decrease of 66.84% compared to last year's 4,234 offences.

Peak Day & Times

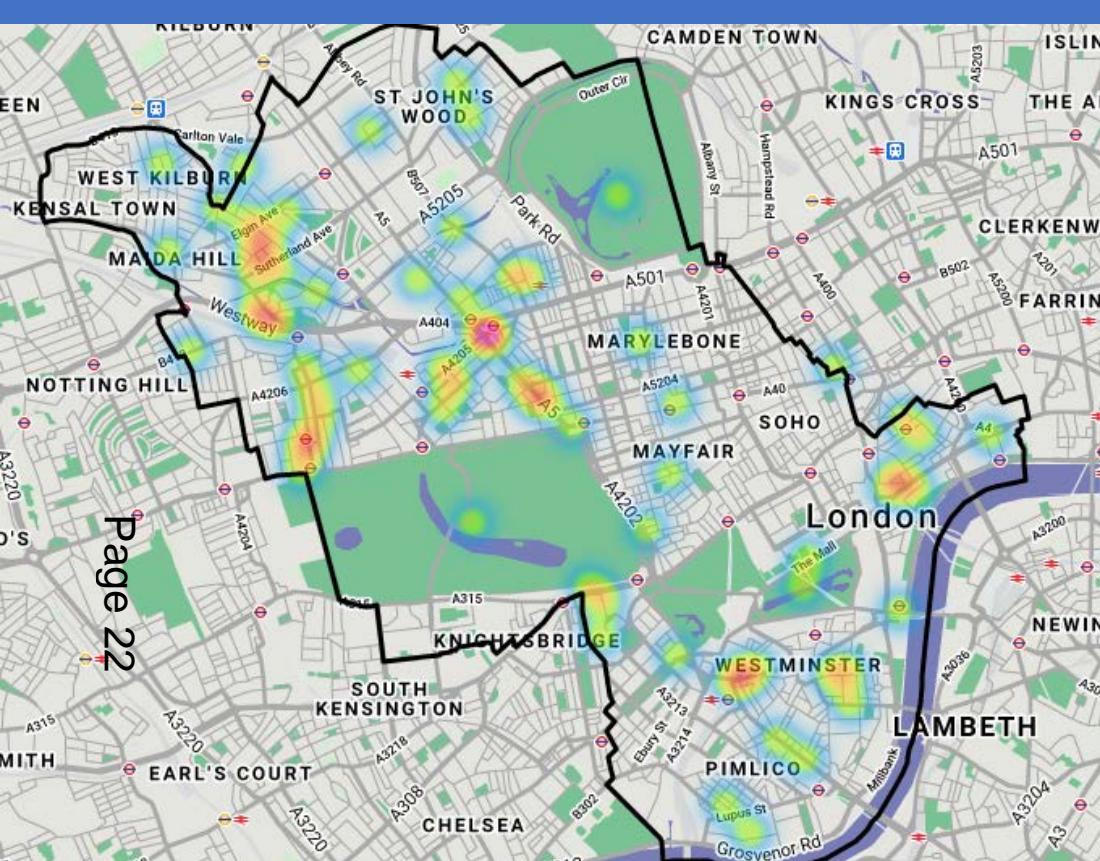
Tuesday (17) between 1300-2000hrs

Saturday (14) between 1800-1900hrs

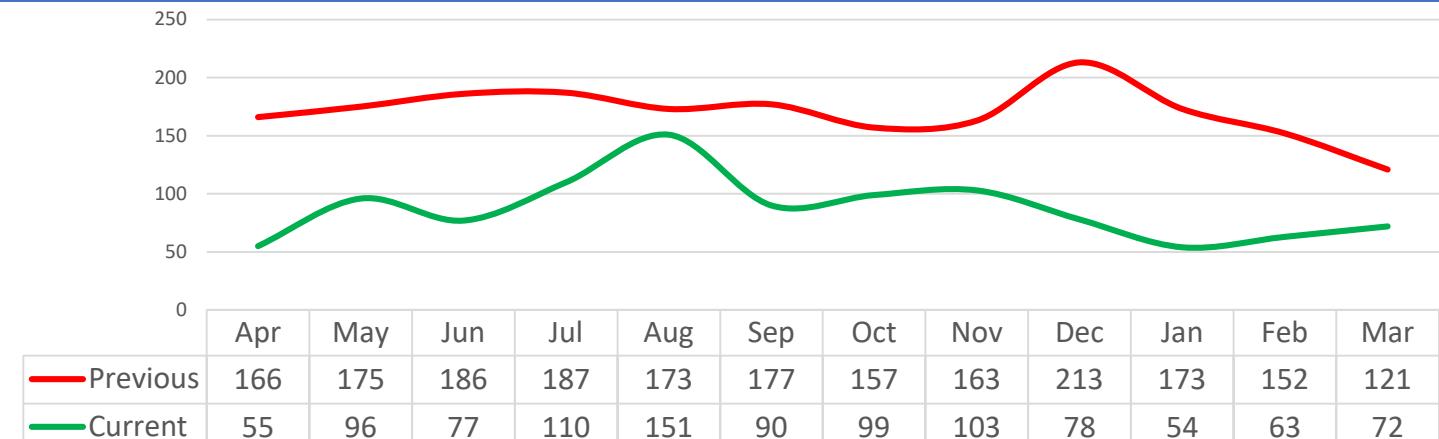


Overall knife crime

(This includes all knife features, see below)



Top 5 offence/crime types	Count
Violence Against the Person - Offensive Weapon	25
Robbery - Personal Property	16
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	11
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	6
Violence Against the Person - Serious Wounding	3



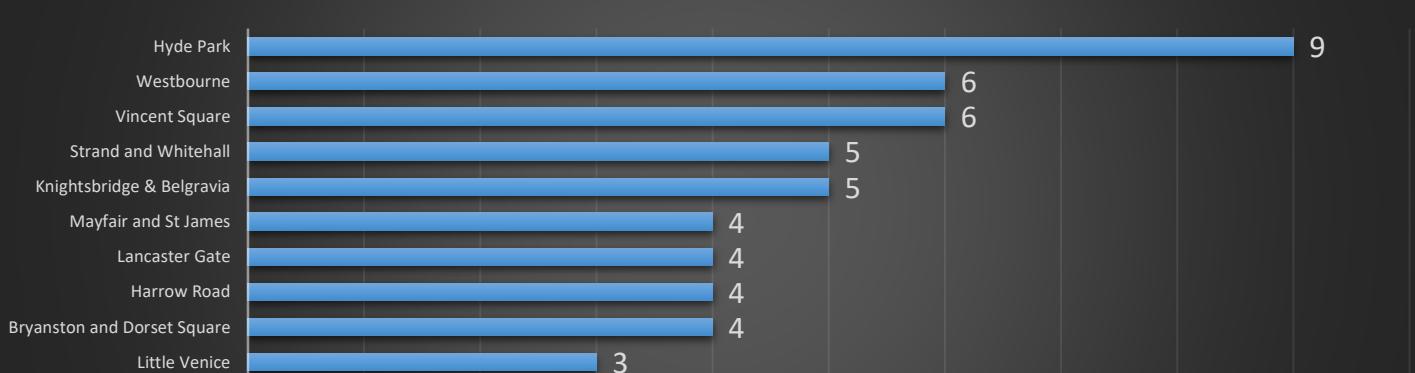
For March there were 72 offences, this is a decrease of 40.5% compared to last year's 121 offences and an increase of 14.29% compared to February's 63 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 1,048 offences, this is a decrease of 48.7% compared to last year's 2,043 offences.

Peak Day & Times

Tuesday (19) between 1700-1900hrs

Saturday (12) between 1500-1600hrs

- WK – Knife or bladed instrument -69
- WS – Sharp or pointed instrument -10
- XI – Knife or other sharp instrument used to injure -4
- XP – Knife or other sharp instrument intimidated -5
- XT – Knife or other sharp instrument used as a threat or in an attempt to injure -25
- XU – Knife intimidated victim not convinced present -1



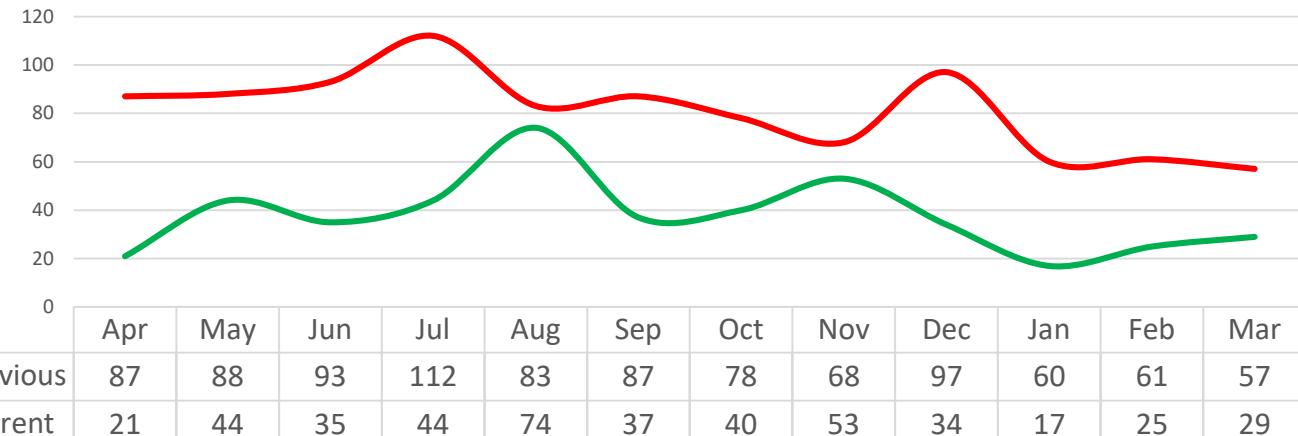
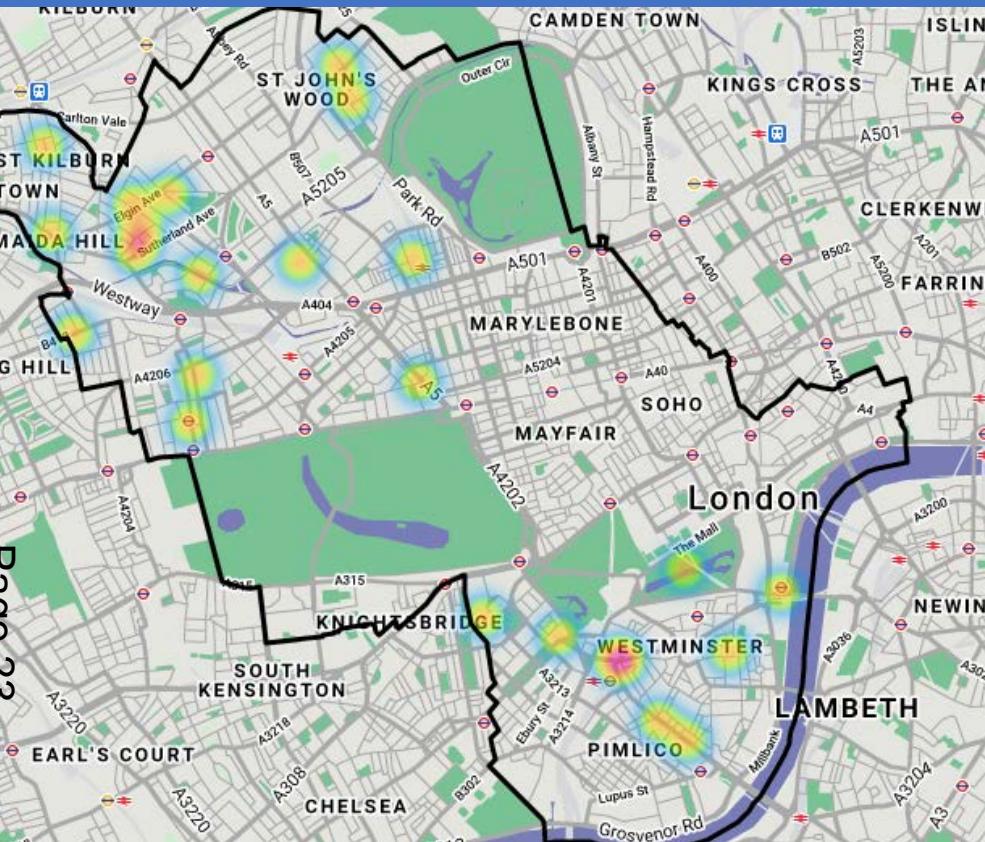
Knife Crime – XI/XT

(See below for definition)

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Top 5 offence/crime types

	Count
Robbery - Personal Property	13
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	6
Violence Against the Person - Serious Wounding	3
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	2
Violence Against the Person - Offensive Weapon	2



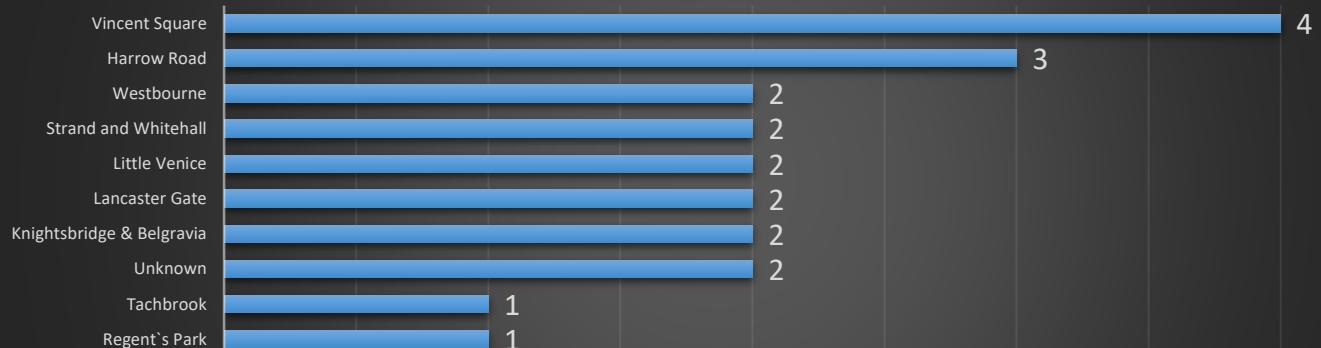
For March there were 29 offences, this is a decrease of 49.12% compared to last year's 57 offences and an increase of 16.00% compared to February's 25 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 453 offences, this is a decrease of 53.35% compared to last year's 971 offences.

Peak Day & Times

Tuesday (6) between 1600-1900hrs

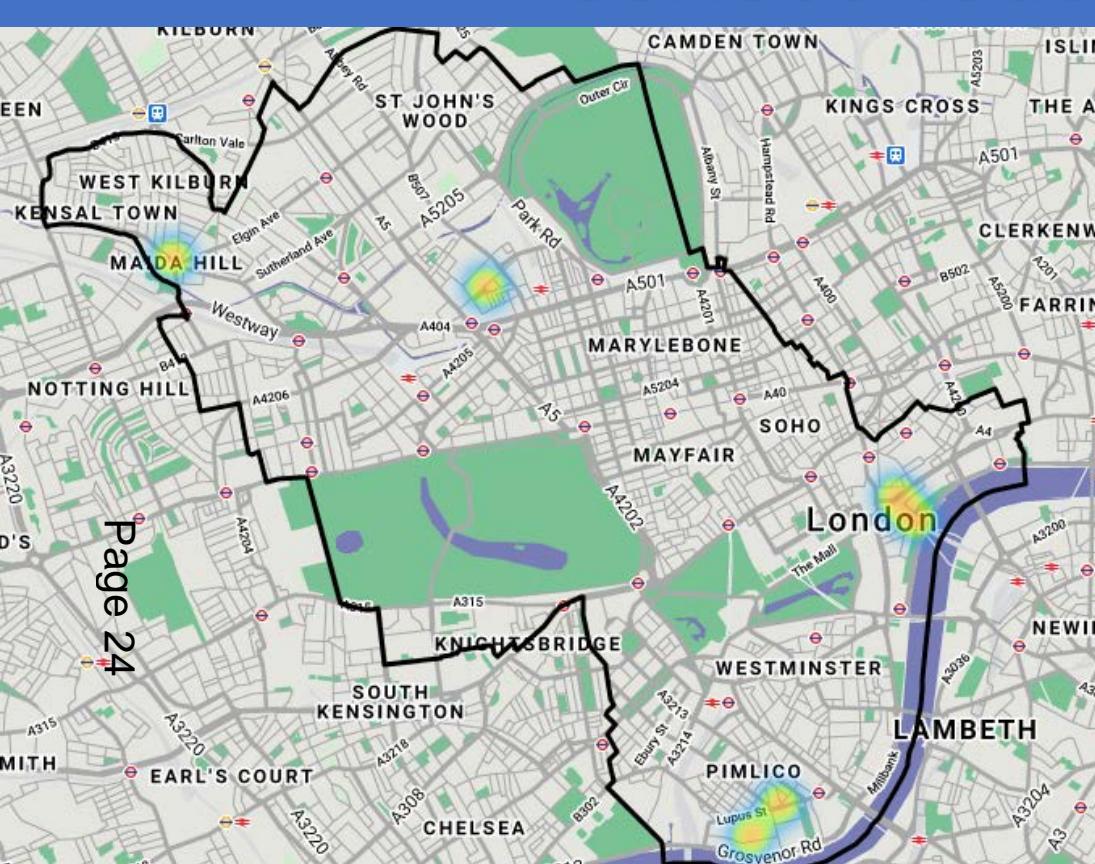
Saturday (6) no peak times

XI – Knife or other sharp instrument used to injure - 4
XT – Knife or other sharp instrument used as a threat or in an attempt to injure - 25



OFFICIAL

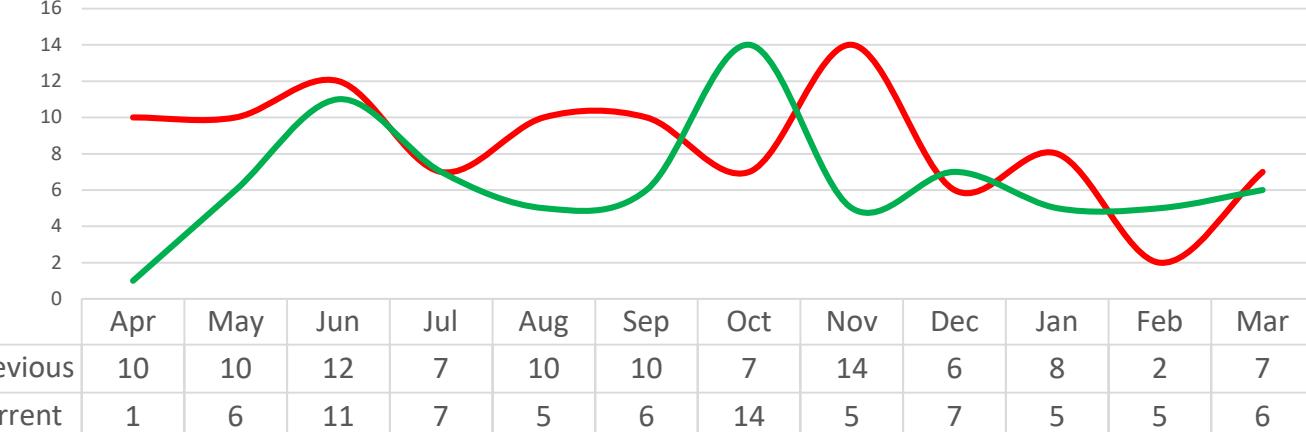
Serious Youth Violence (see definition used below)



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Top 5 offence/crime types

	Count
Violence Against the Person - Serious Wounding	6
Violence Against the Person - Actual Harm	1
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	1
Violence Against the Person - Threatening behaviour	1

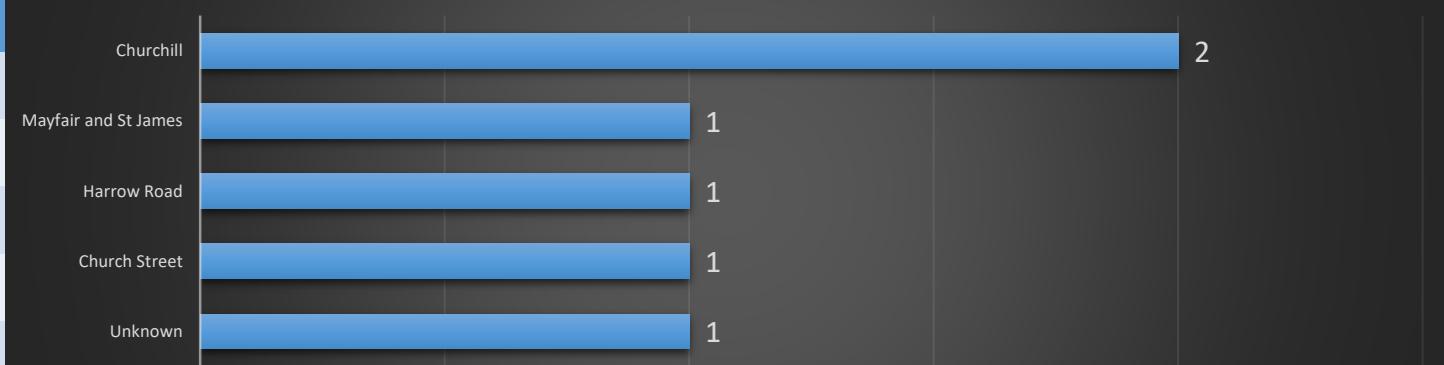


For March there were 6 offences, this is a decrease of 14.29% compared to last year's 7 offences and an increase of 20.00% compared to February's 5 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 78 offences, this is a decrease of 24.27% compared to last year's 103 offences.

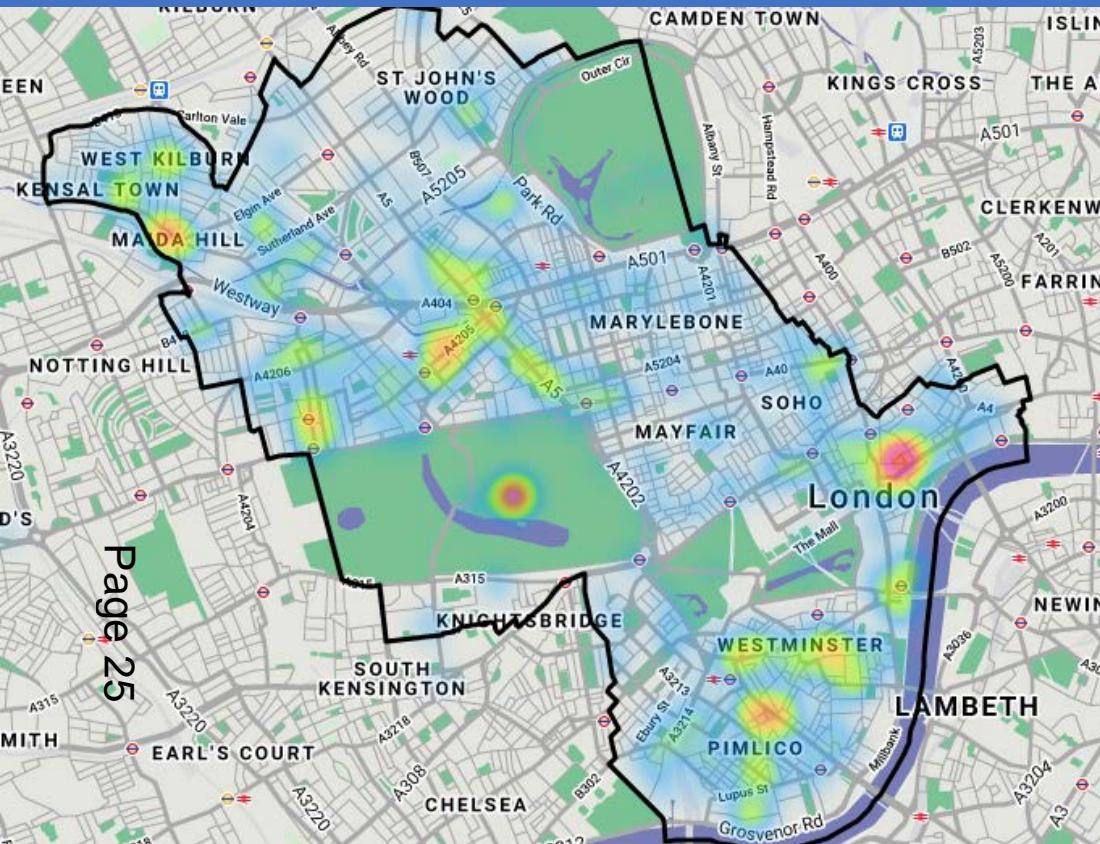
Peak Day & Times

Tuesday (3) between 1500-1700hrs

Murder, GBH, Assault with knife/bladed article where the victim is aged between 1-19

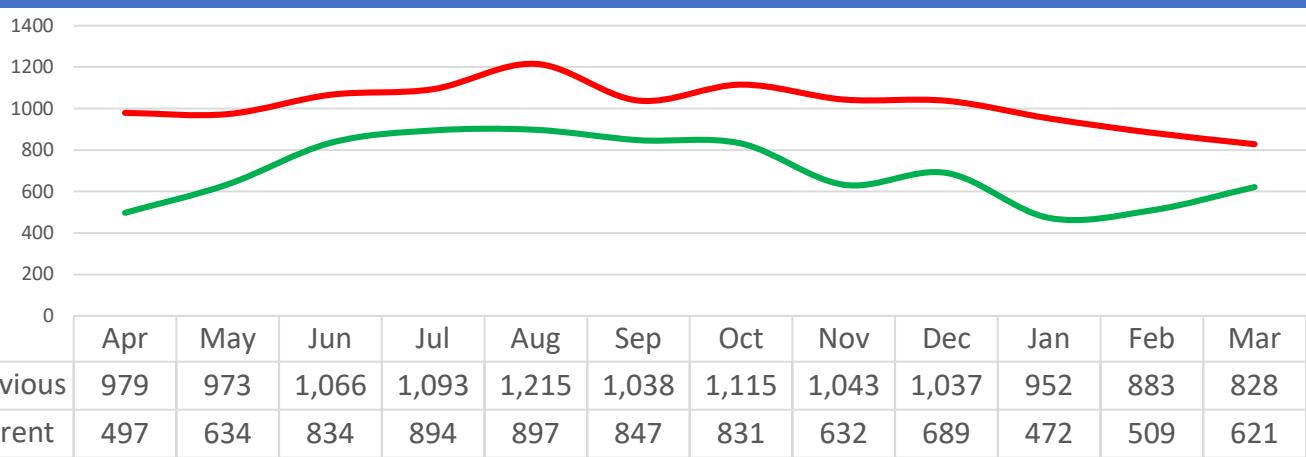


Violence Against the Person Exl Domestic



Top 5 offence/crime types

	Count
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	274
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	161
Violence Against the Person - Assault with Injury	93
Violence Against the Person - Offensive Weapon	43
Violence Against the Person - Other Violence	32

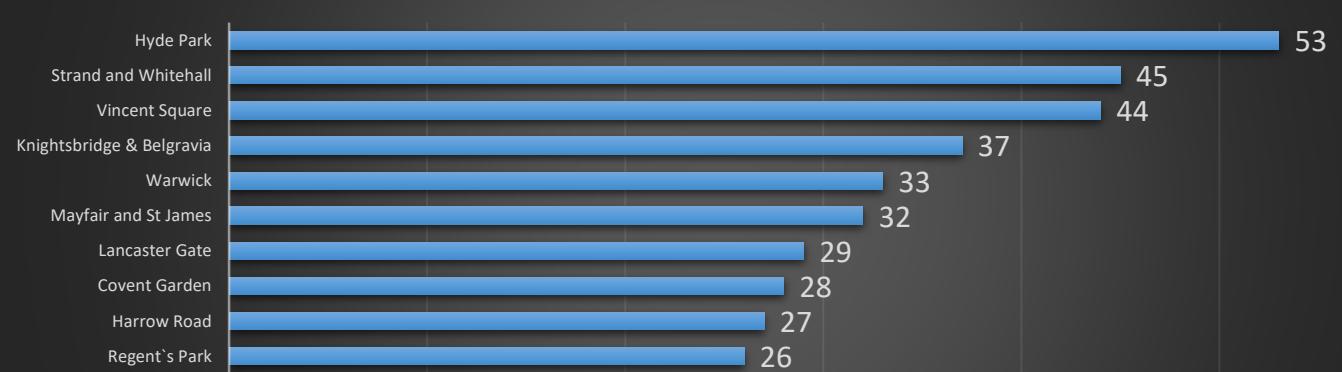


For March there were 621 offences, this is a decrease of 25% compared to last year's 828 offences and an increase of 22.00% compared to February's 509 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 8,357 offences, this is a decrease of 31.62% compared to last year's 12,222 offences.

Peak Day & Times

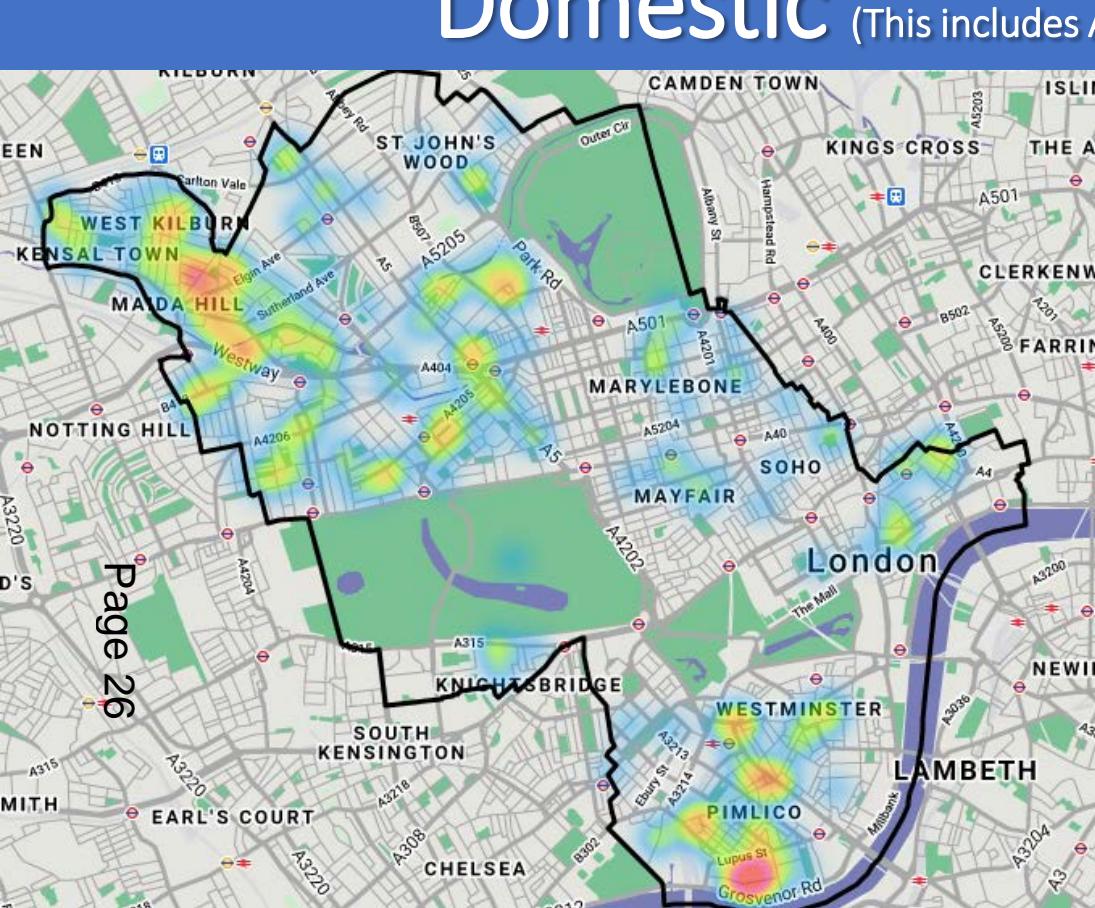
Tuesday (112) between 1500-2100hrs

Monday (98) between 1500-1900hrs



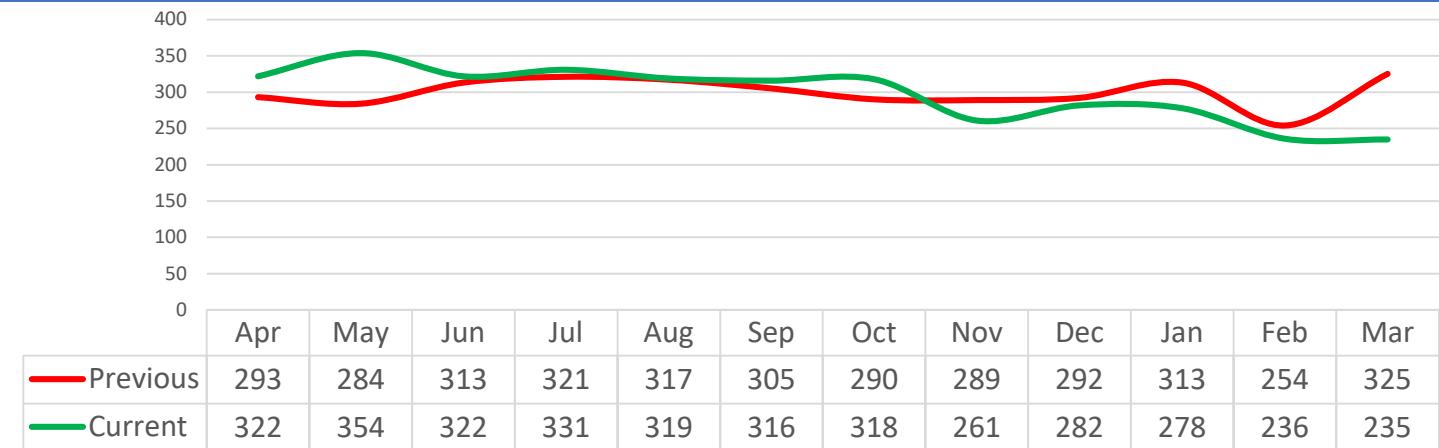
Domestic

(This includes ALL crime types where a domestic incident has been flagged)



Top 5 offence/crime types

	Count
Non Crime Domestic	113
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	36
Violence Against the Person - Assault with Injury	28
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	27
Violence Against the Person - Serious Wounding	9

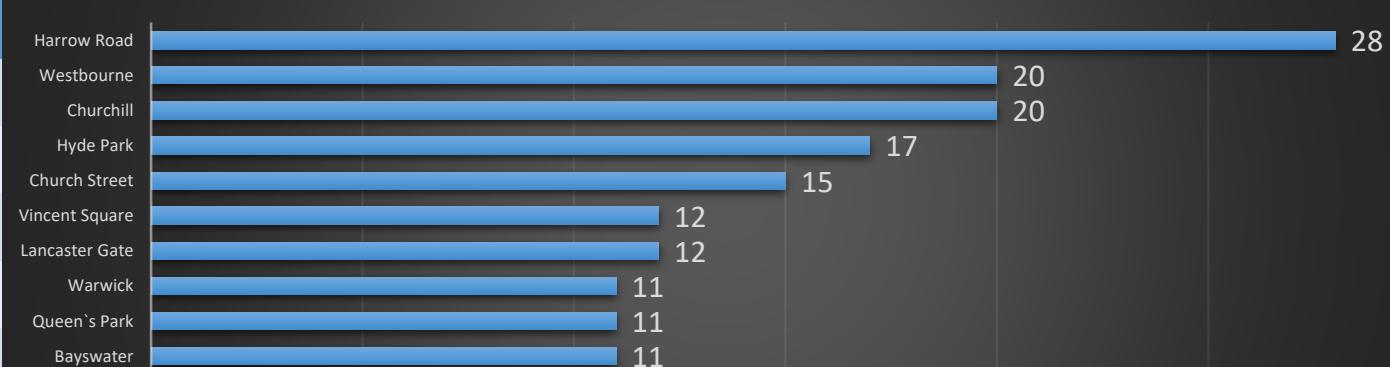


For March there were 235 offences, this is a decrease of 27.69% compared to last year's 325 offences and a decrease of 0.42% compared to February's 236 offences. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 3,574 offences, this is a decrease of 0.61% compared to last year's 3,596 offences.

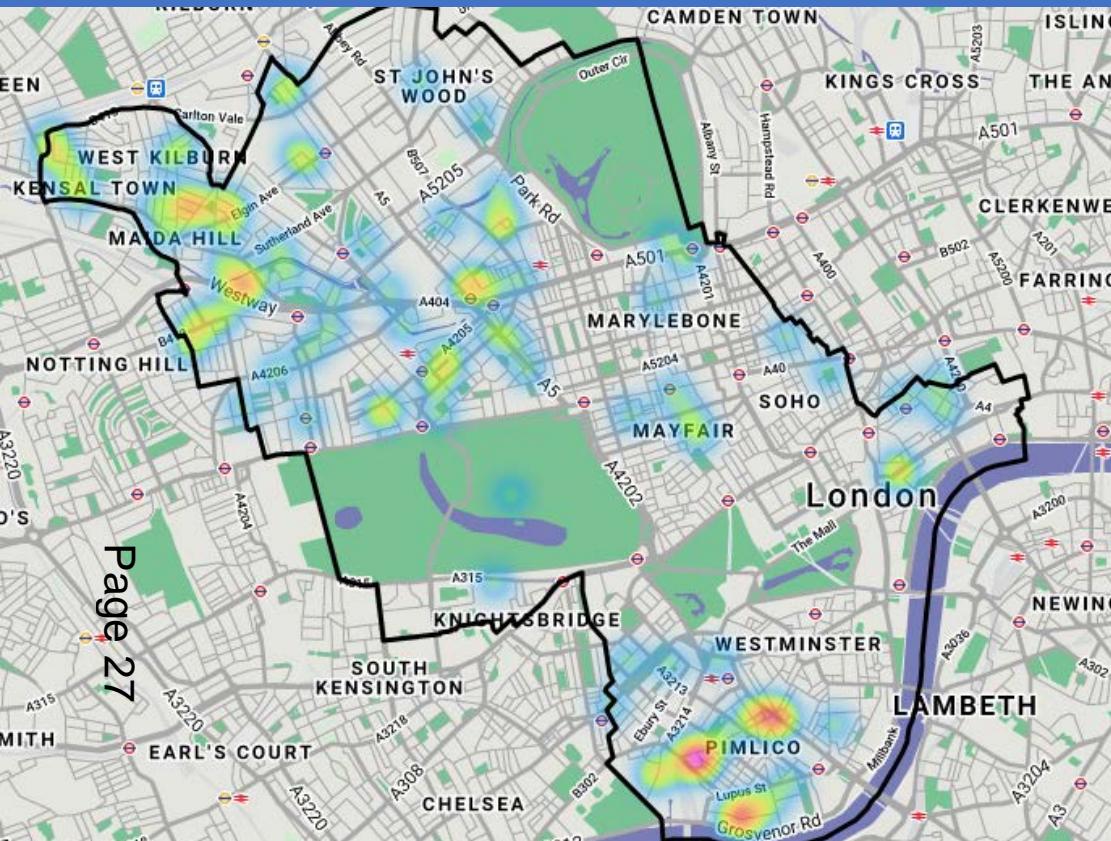
Peak Day & Times

Sunday (42) between 0000-0300hrs / 1200-1400hrs

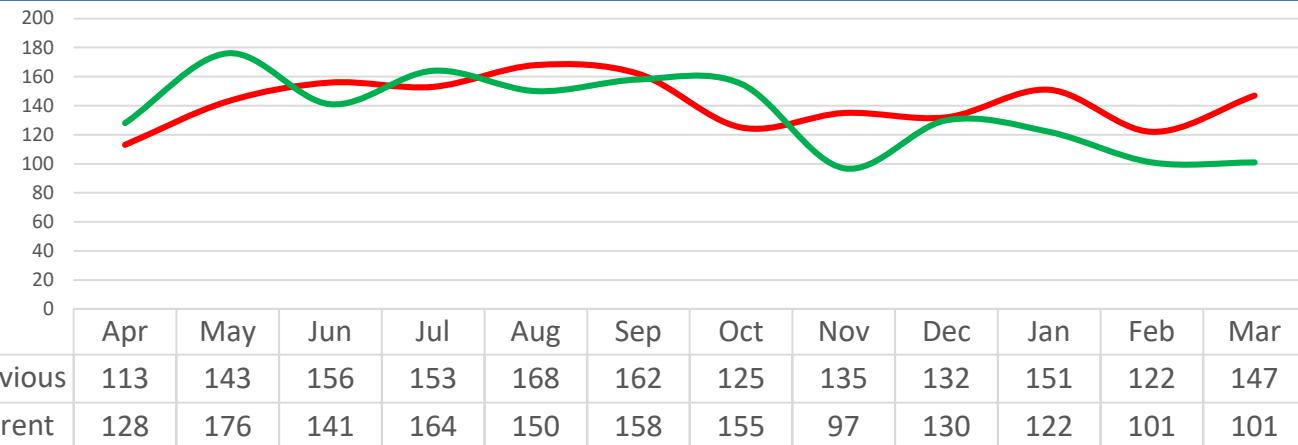
Wednesday (36) between 0000-0400hrs



Violence Against the Person - Domestic



Top 5 offence/crime types	Count
Violence Against the Person - Common Assault	36
Violence Against the Person - Assault with Injury	28
Violence Against the Person - Harassment	27
Violence Against the Person - Serious Wounding	9
Violence Against the Person - Other Violence	6



For March there were 101 offences, this is a decrease of 31.29% compared to last year's 147 offences and no change compared to February. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 1,623 offences, this is a decrease of 4.92% compared to last year's 1,707 offences.

Peak Day & Times

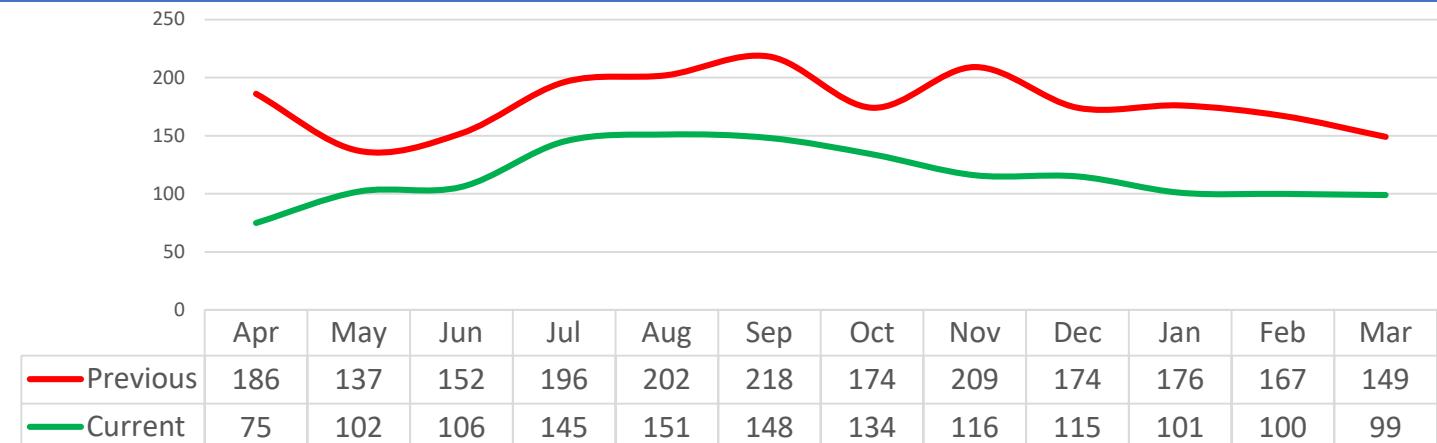
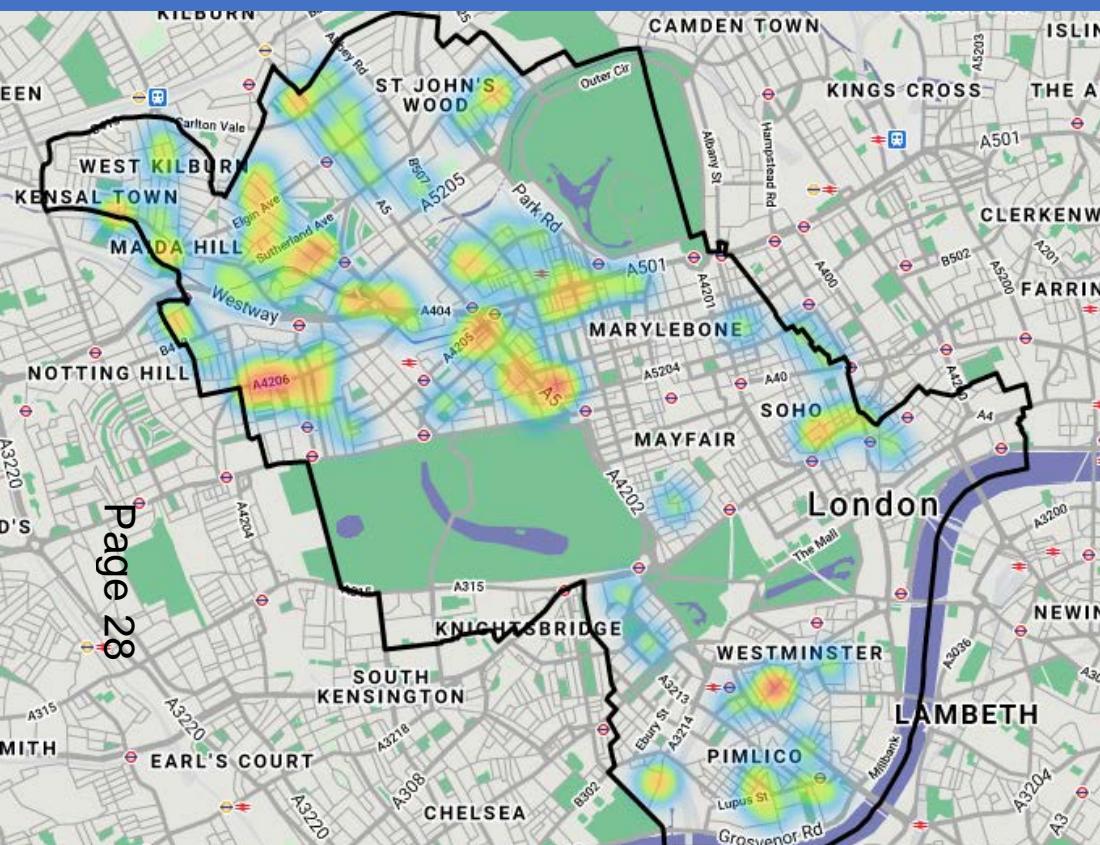
Sunday (18) between 1100-1300hrs / 1800-2100hrs

Monday (16) between 0000-0200hrs



Residential Burglary

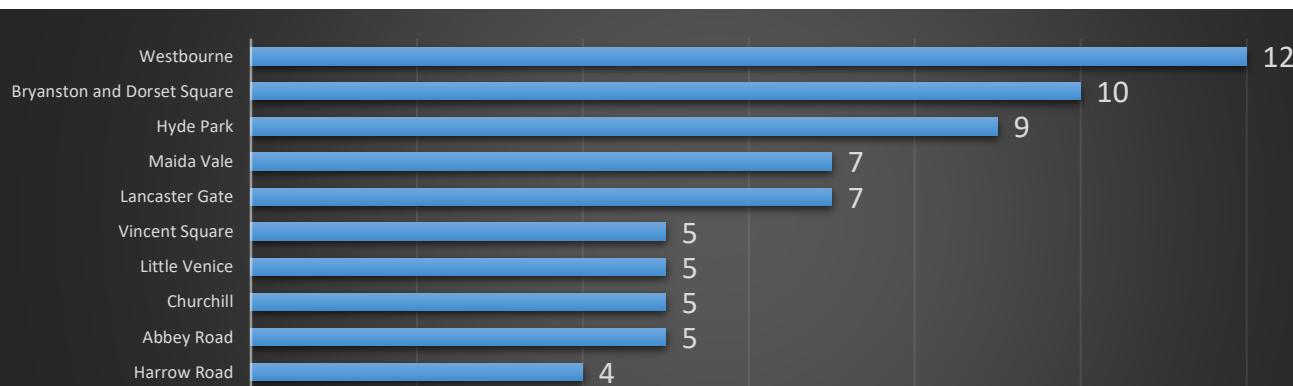
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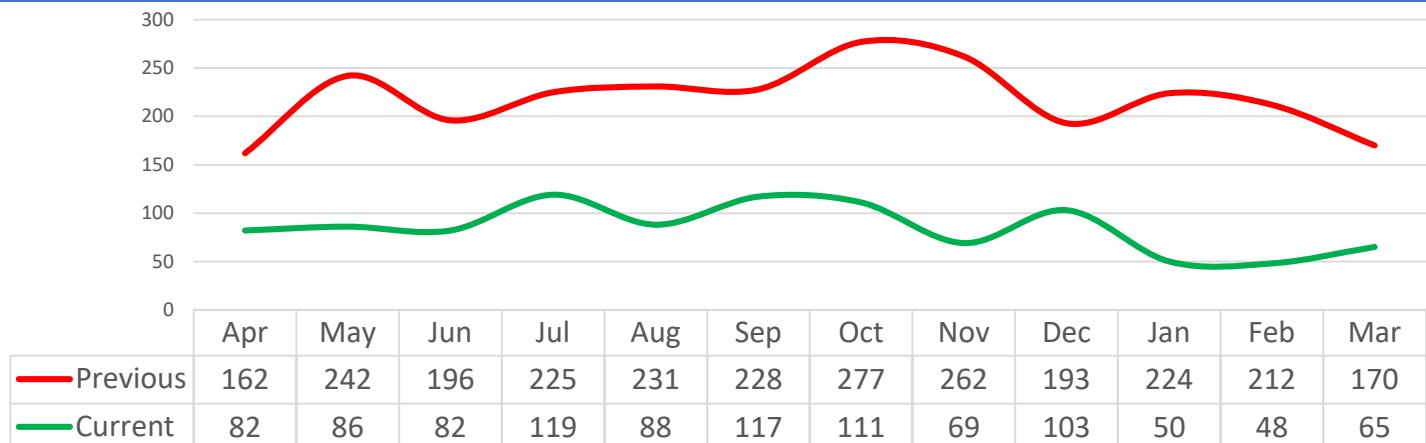
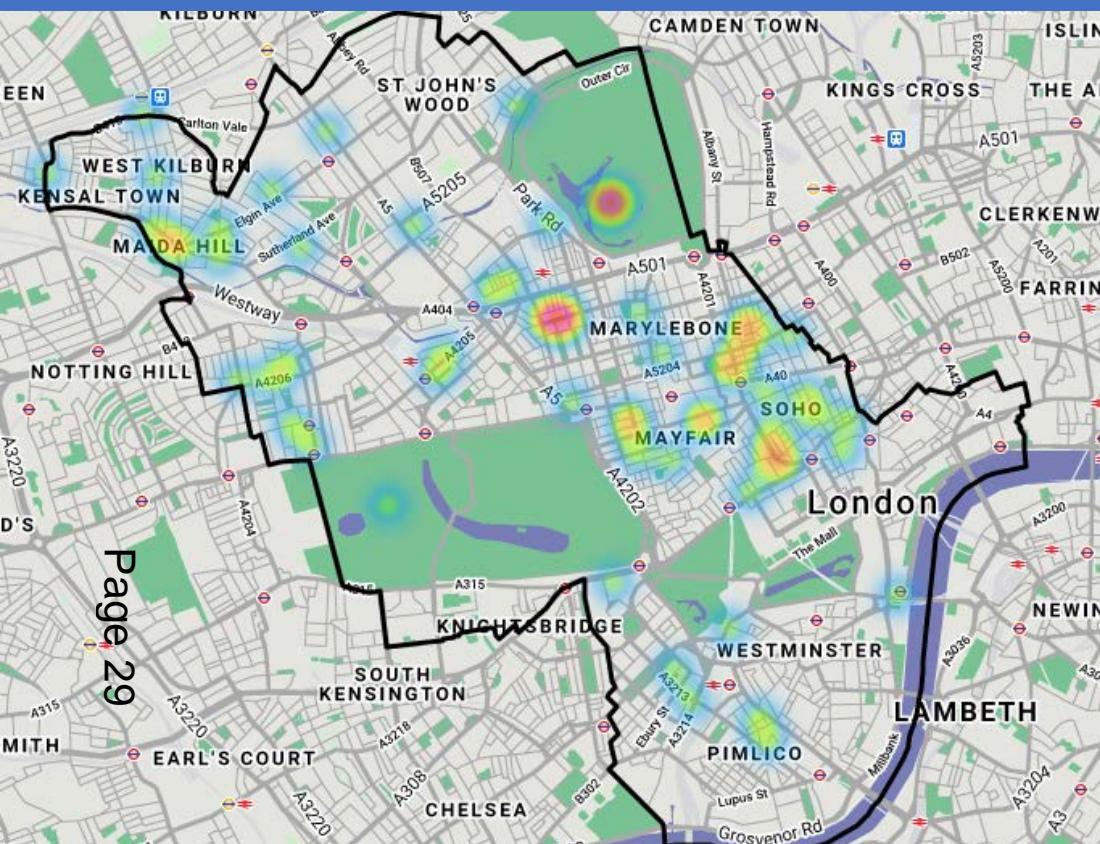
For March there were 99 offences, this is a decrease of 33.56% compared to last year's 149 offences and a decrease of 1% compared to February's 100 offences. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 1,392 offences, this is a decrease of 34.95% compared to last year's 2,140 offences.

Peak Day & Times

Friday (24) between 0000-0200hrs / 1500-1700hrs



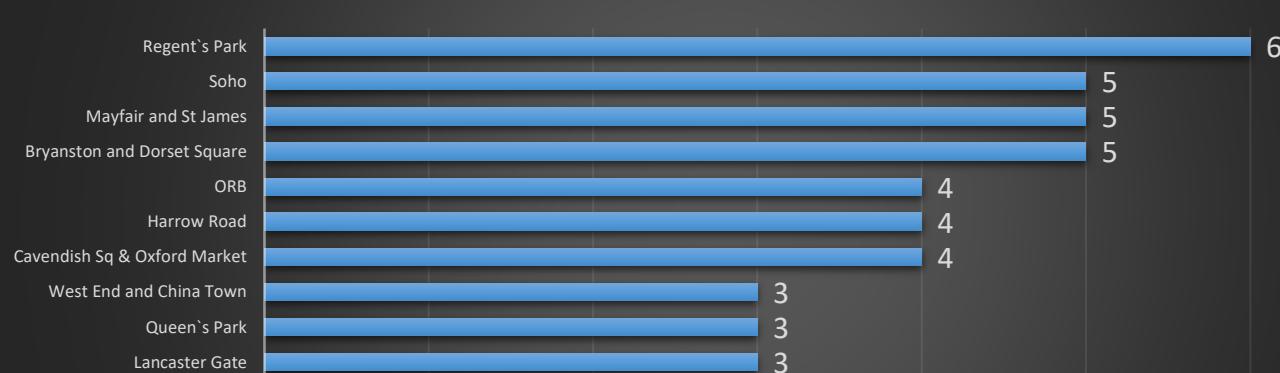
Non Residential Burglary



For March there were 65 offences, this is a decrease of 61.76% compared to last year's 170 offences and an increase of 35.42% compared to February's 48 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 1,020 offences, this is a decrease of 61.1% compared to last year's 2,622 offences.

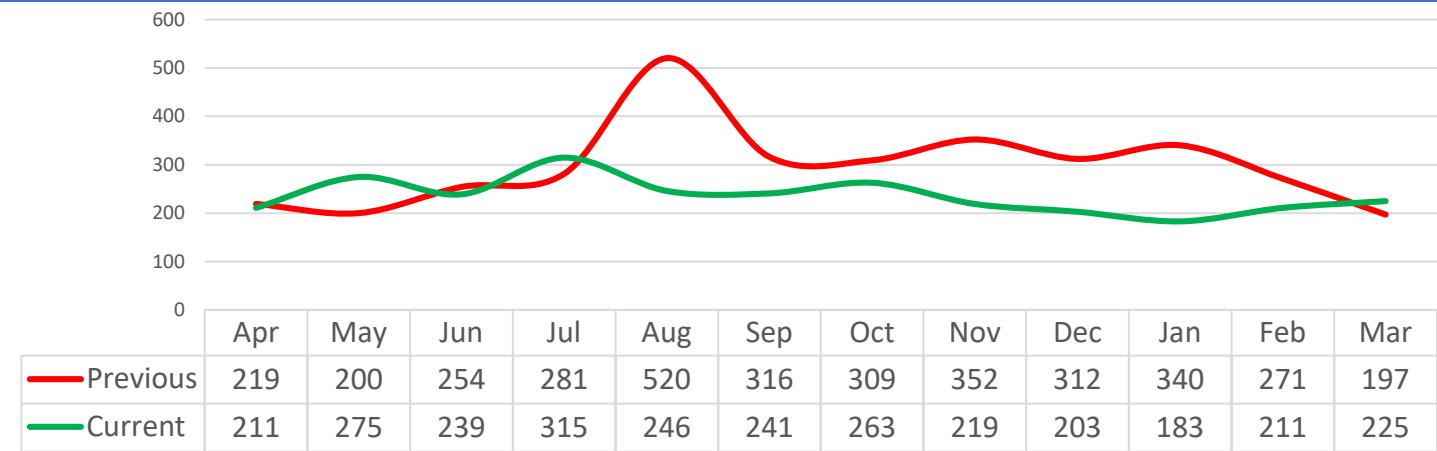
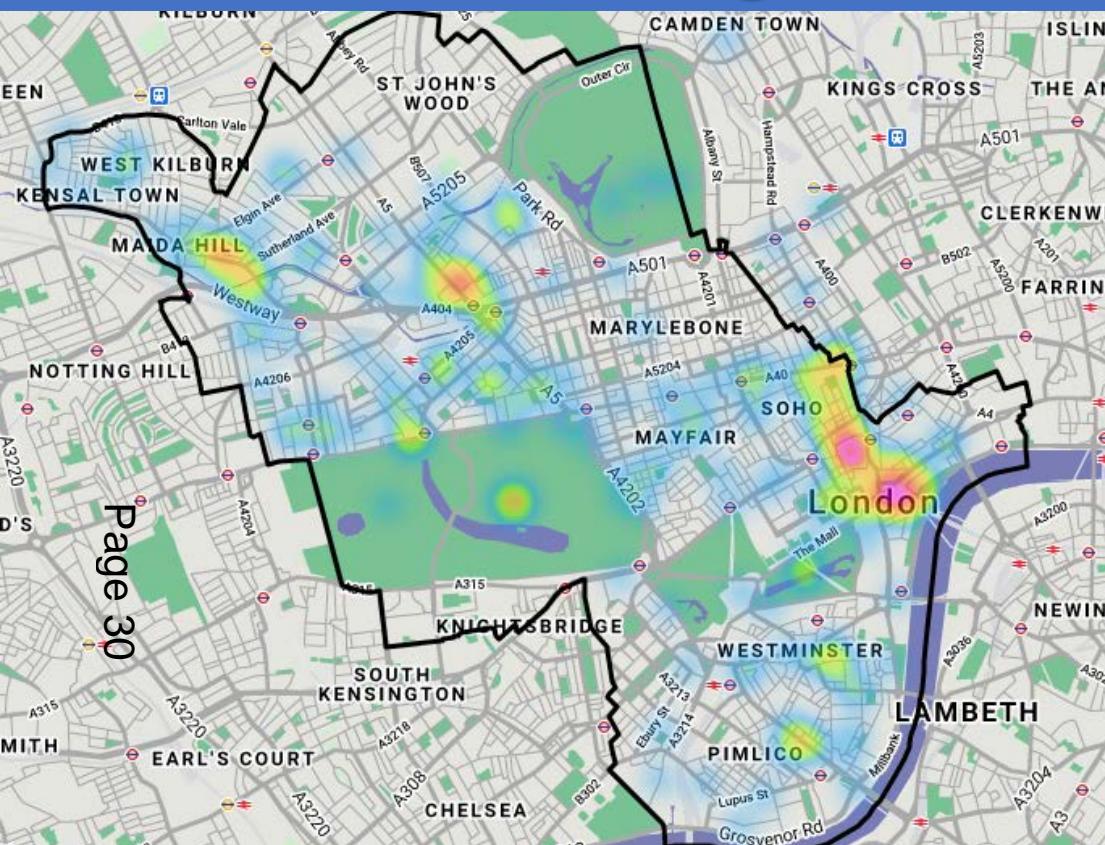
Peak Day & Times

Tuesday (17) between 0400-0600hrs / 1600-1800hrs



Drug Possession

(This covers just basic possession offences)

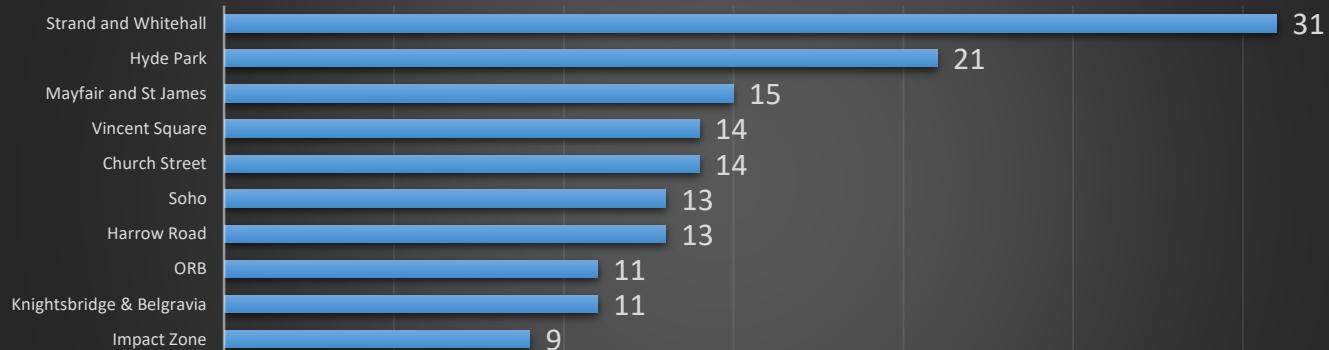


For March there were 225 offences, this is an increase of 14.21% compared to last year's 197 offences and an increase of 6.64% compared to February's 211 offences. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 2,831 offences, this is a decrease of 20.72% compared to last year's 3,571 offences.

Peak Day & Times

Saturday (36) between 0000-0100hrs / 1700-1900hrs

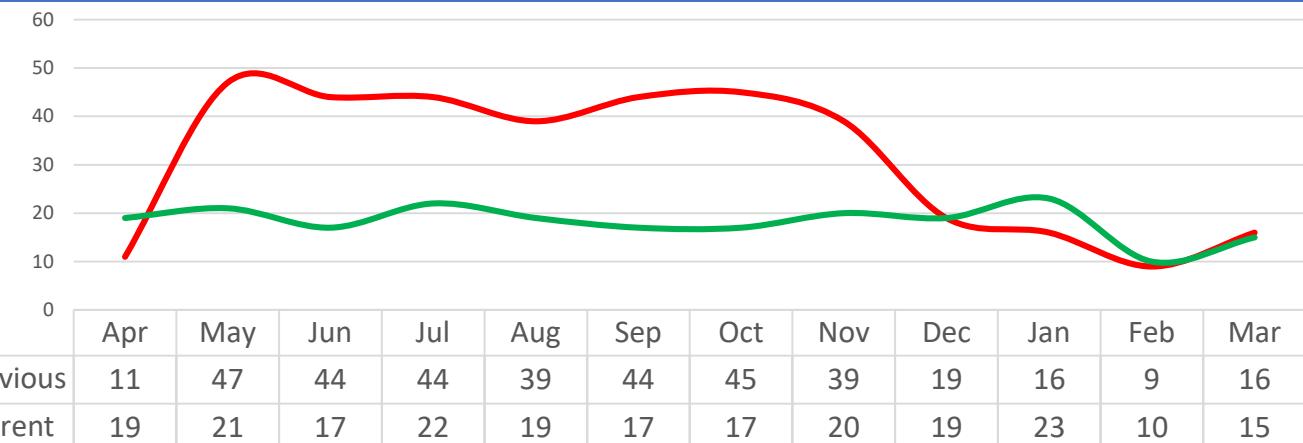
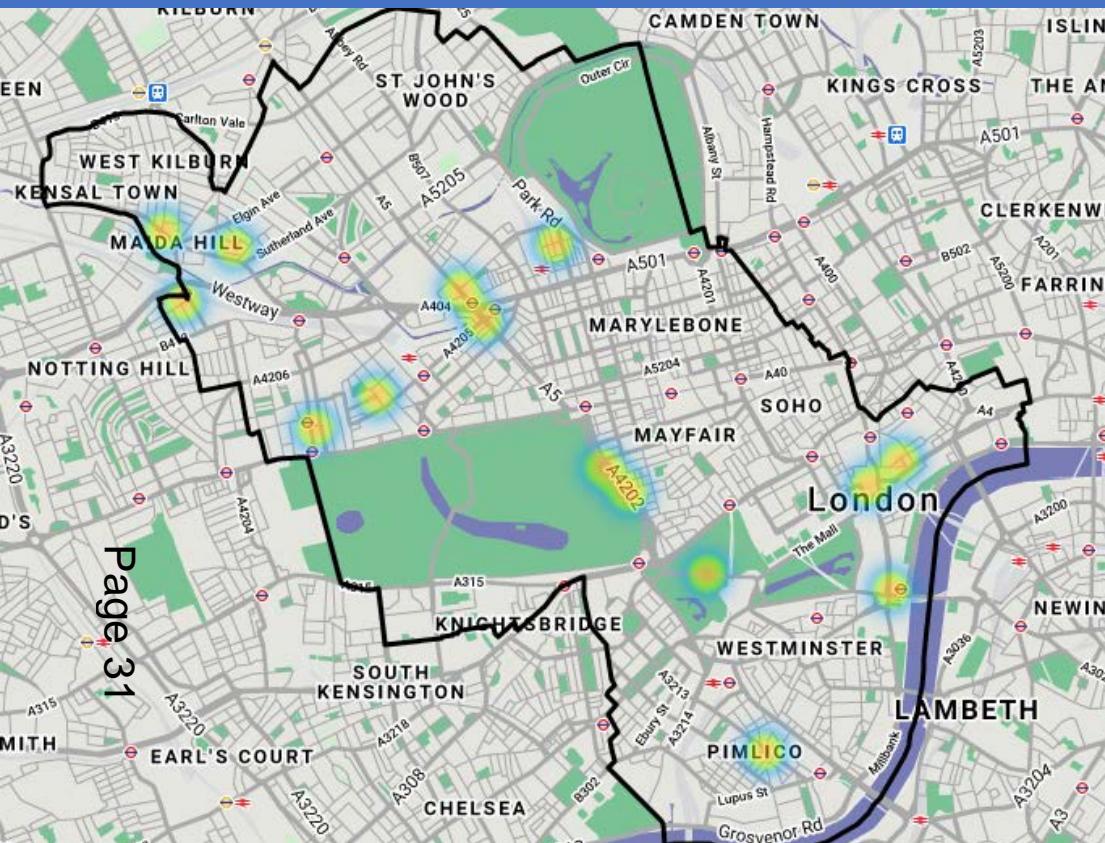
Friday (35) between 0000-0200hrs / 2000-0000hrs



Drug Dealing

(This covers PWITS, importation, exportation, production)

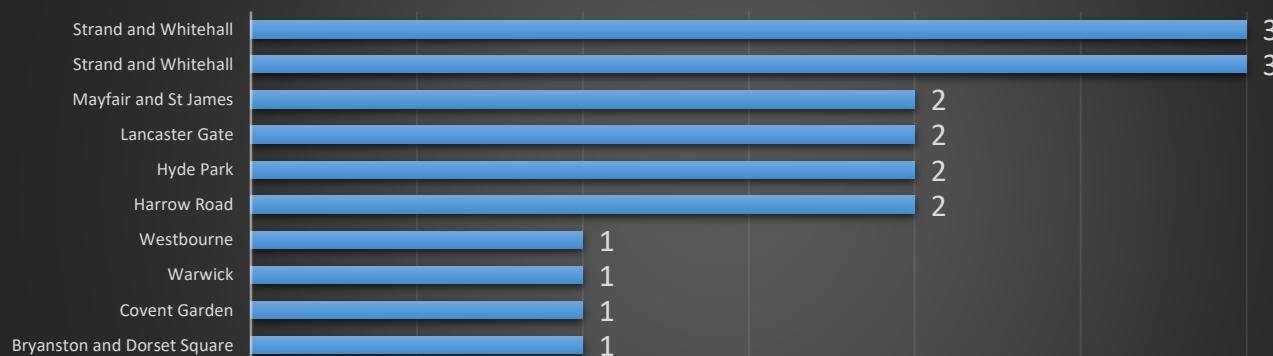
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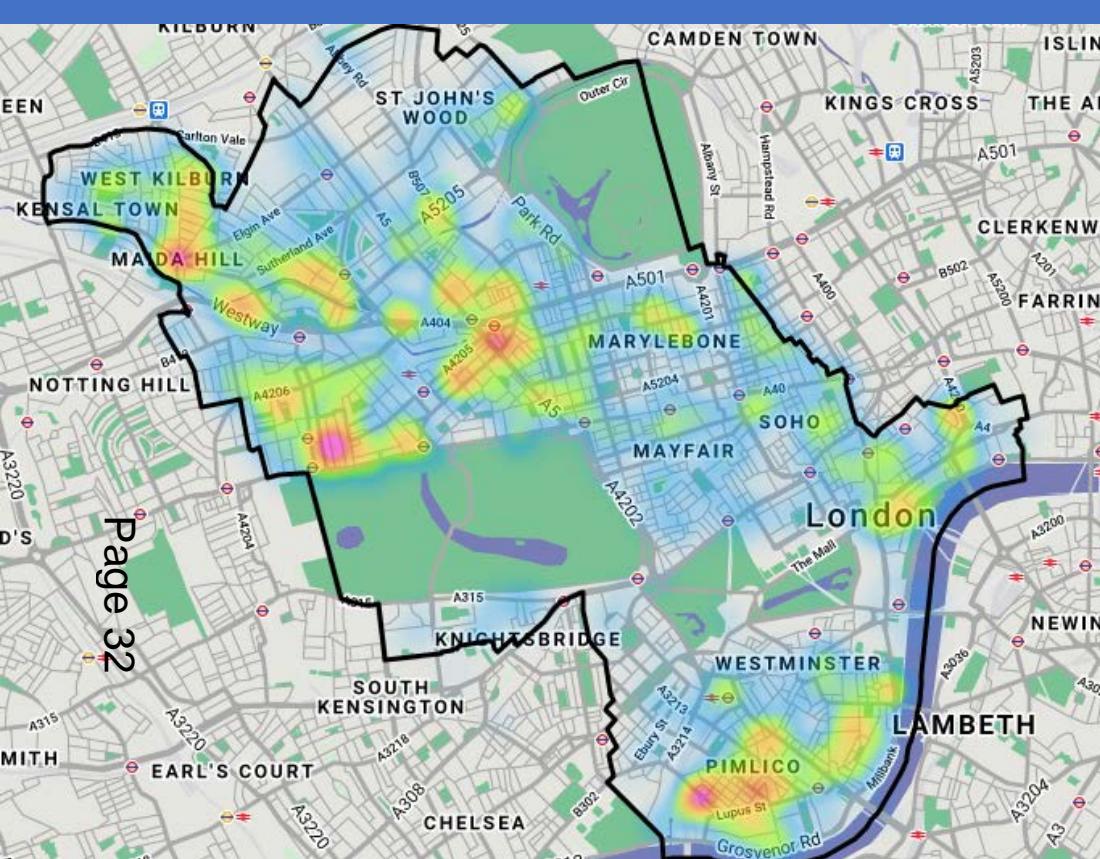
For March there were 15 offences, this is a decrease of 6.25% compared to last year's 16 offences and an increase of 50.00% compared to February's 10 offences
Over previous rolling 12 months there were 219 offences, this is a decrease of 41.29% compared to last year's 373 offences.

Peak Day & Times

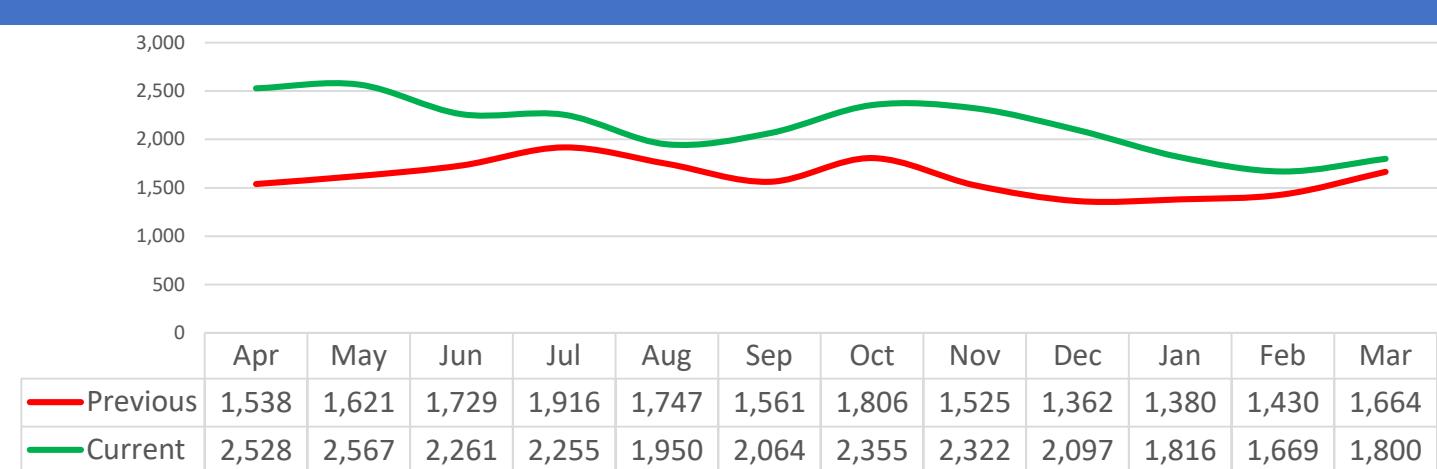
Thursday (5) between 0900-1100hrs



Anti Social Behaviour



Category	Count
Environmental	74
Nuisance	1618
Personal	110

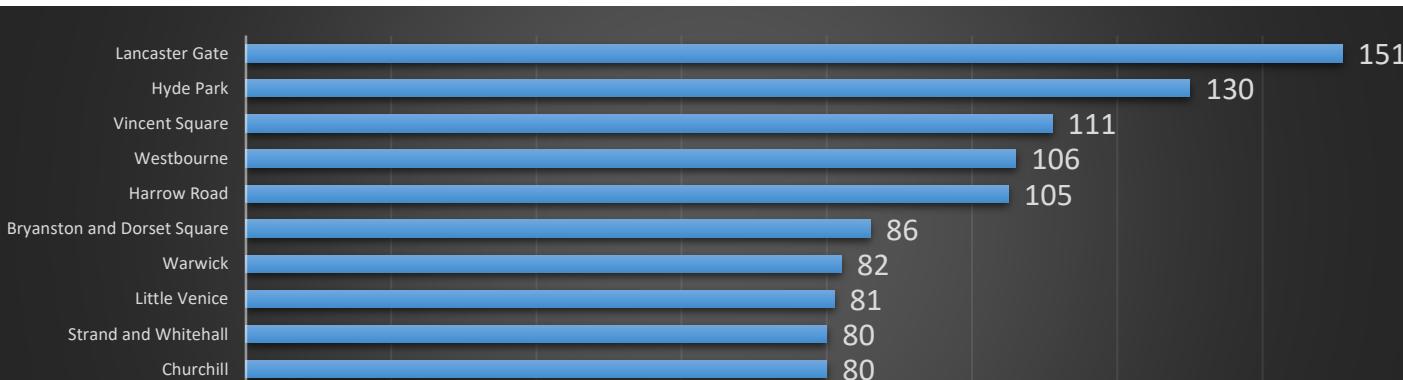


For March there were 1,800 reports, this is an increase of 8.17% compared to last year's 1,664 reports and an increase of 7.85% compared to February's 1,669 reports. Over previous rolling 12 months there were 25,684 reports, this is an increase of 33.22% compared to last year's 19,279 reports.

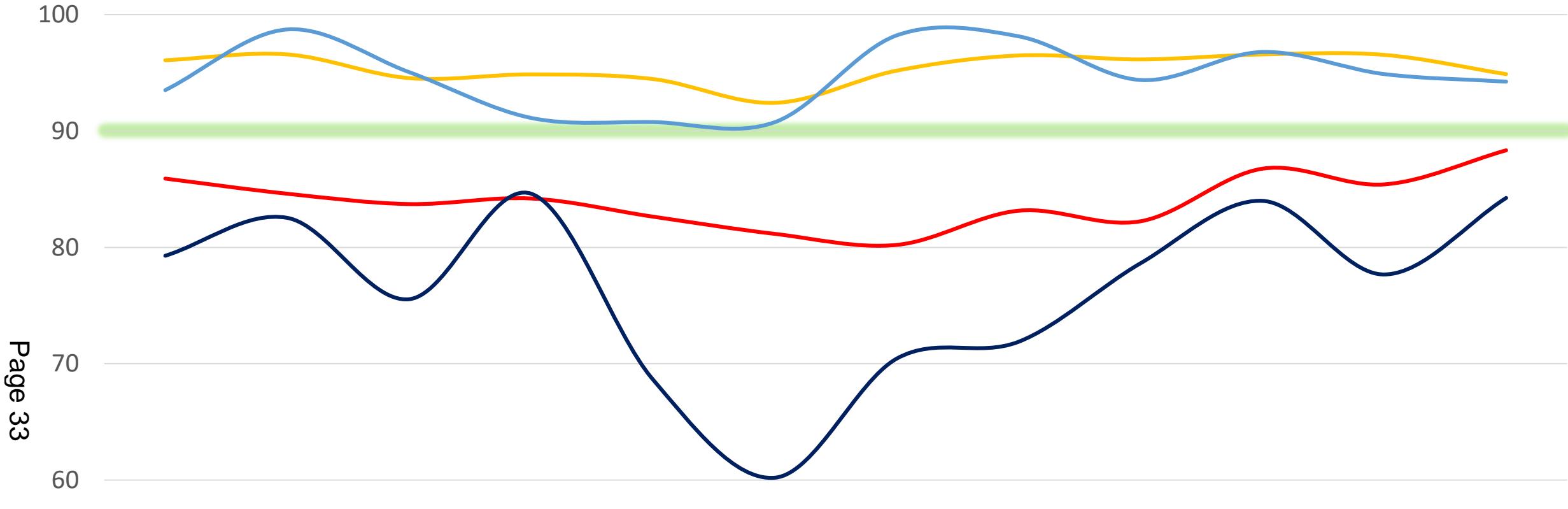
Peak Day & Times

Saturday (340) between 0000-0300hrs / 2000-0000hrs

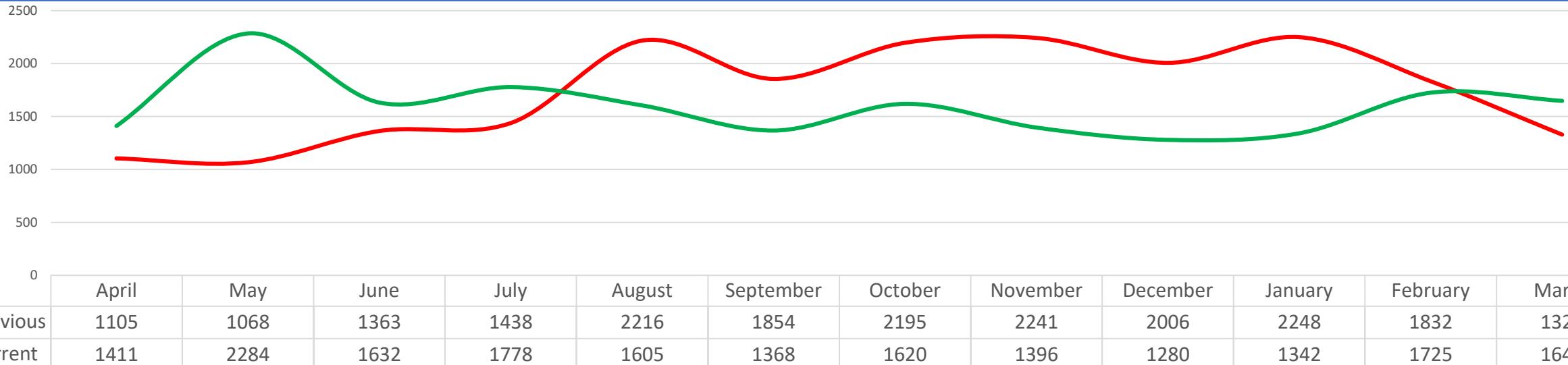
Friday (275) between 2000-0000hrs



'I' Grade Calls

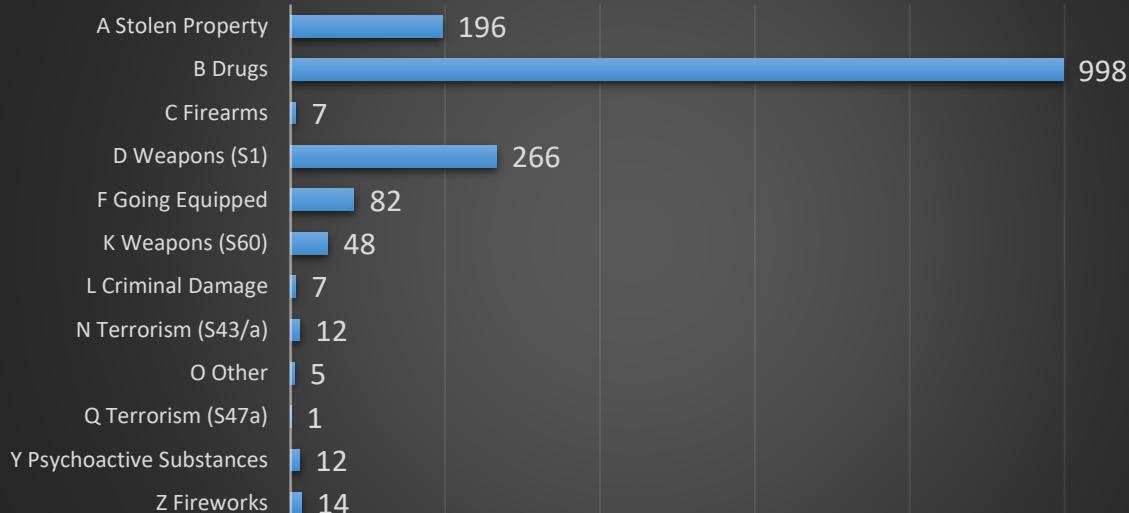


Stop & Search

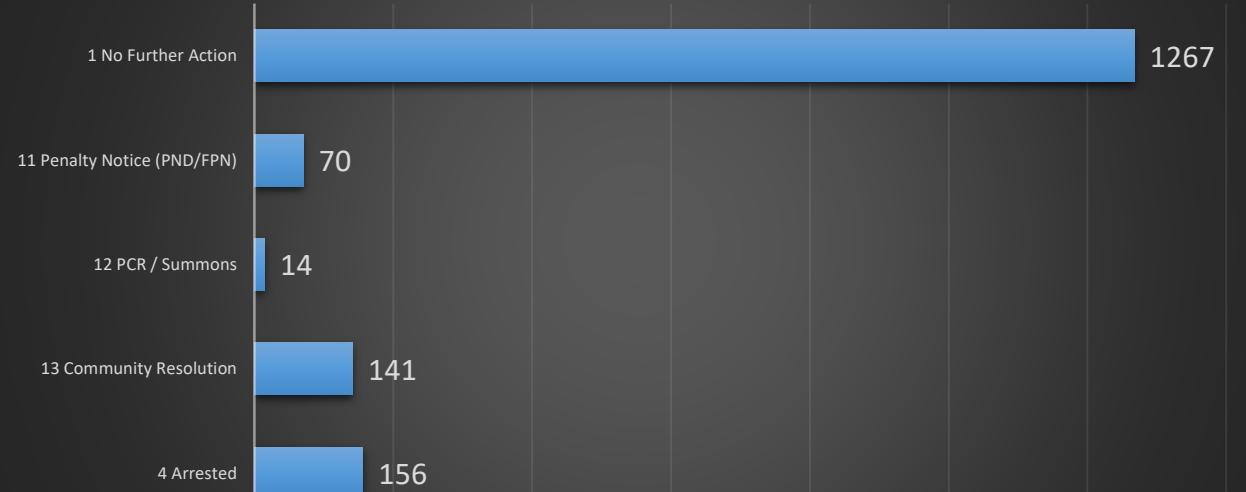


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Stop & Search Reason



Stop & Search Outcome

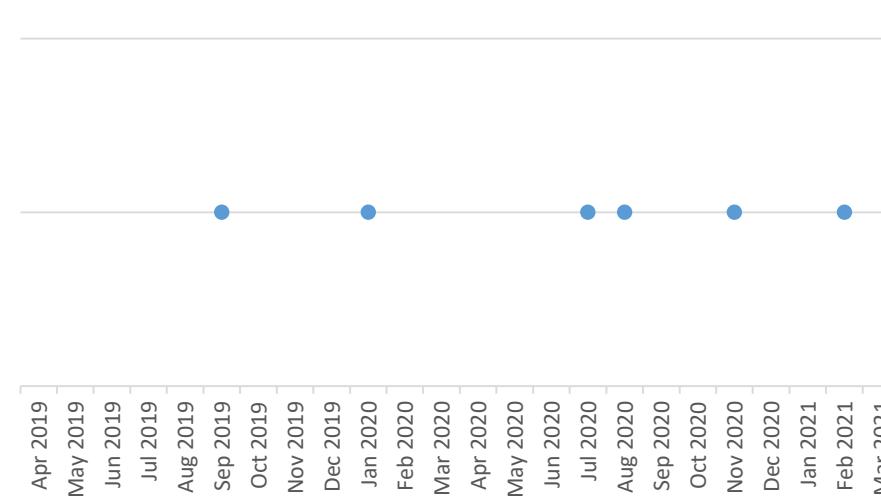


In relation to the following slides.....

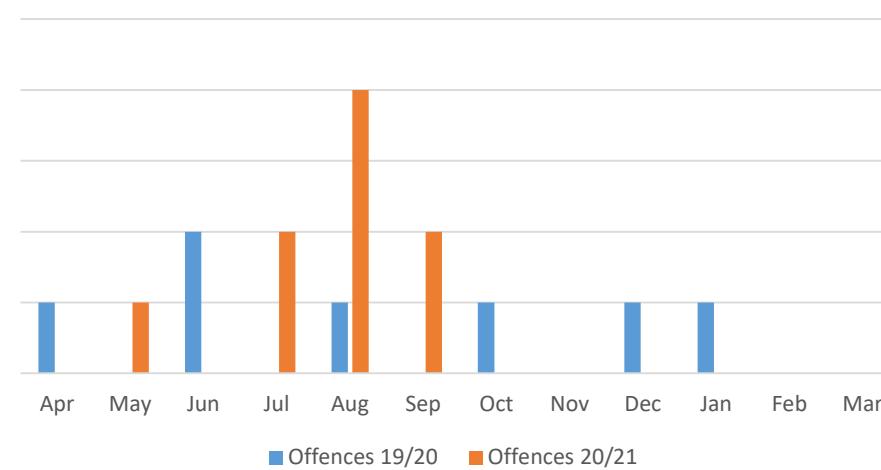
Please note, there can be delays for the offences to be confirmed on CRIS, so the offence totals and SD rates may change accordingly. The attached is a reflection from the CRIS system up to 08/04/21, downloaded on 08/04/21. Final end of year figures will be published w/c 12th of April 2021.



Homicide Offences

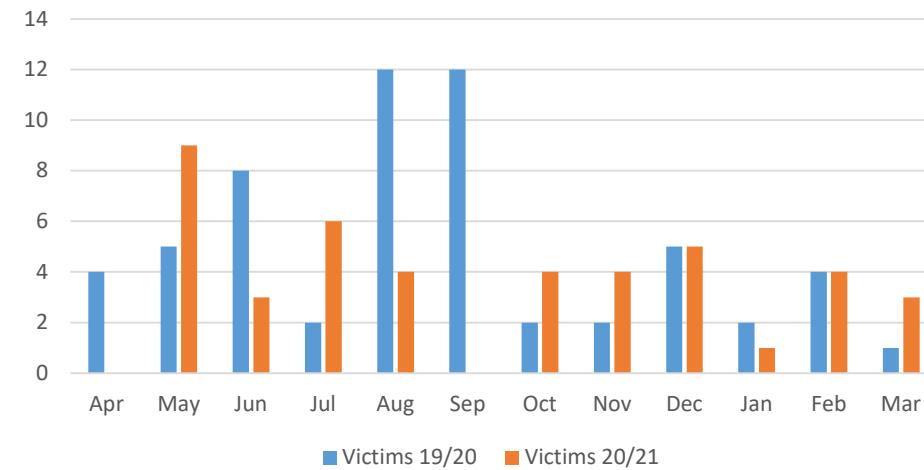


Lethal Barrelled Discharge Offences



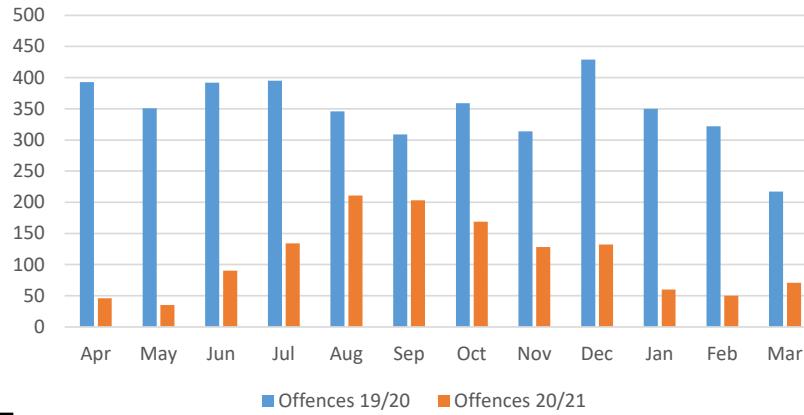
- The FYTD homicide aspiration was to have a reduction in homicide victims. There has currently been an increase of 2 offences (4 homicides in 20/21 compared to 2 in 19/20).
- The FYTD lethal barrelled discharge offence aspiration was to have a reduction. There has currently been an increase of 2 offences.
- The FYTD knife injury victim U25 non DA aspiration was to have a 5% reduction. There has currently been a reduction of 37% across Westminster.

KIV U25 Not DA



Personal robbery offences have decreased by 68% in this financial year, which is above the aspiration of a reduction of 10%.

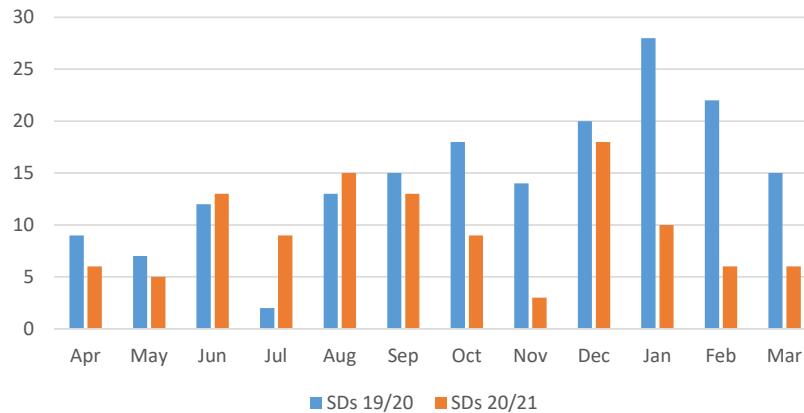
Personal Robbery Offences



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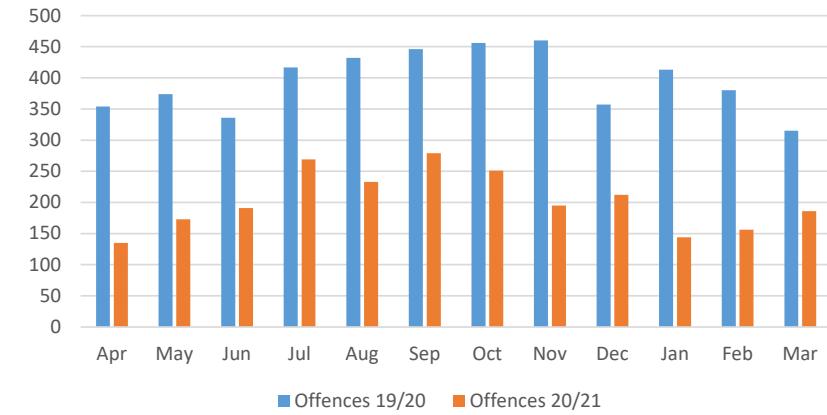
The FYTD personal robbery SD rate is 9%, and improvement of 5% on last year. It is below the 10% aspiration.

Personal Robbery SDs



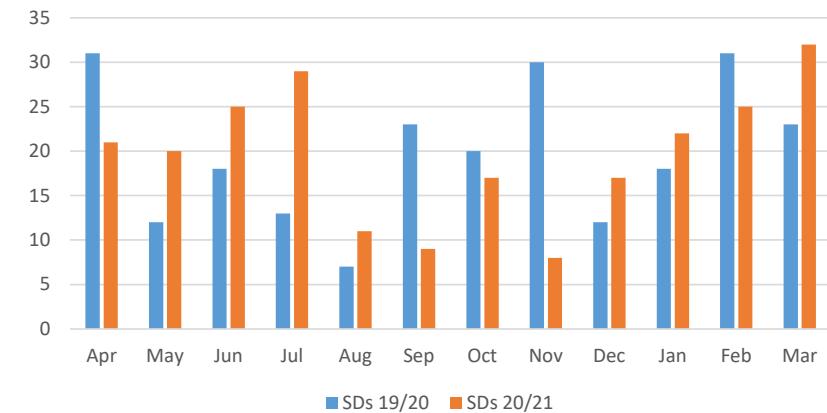
Burglary offences have decreased by 49% in this financial year, which is above the aspiration of a reduction of 2%.

Burglary Offences

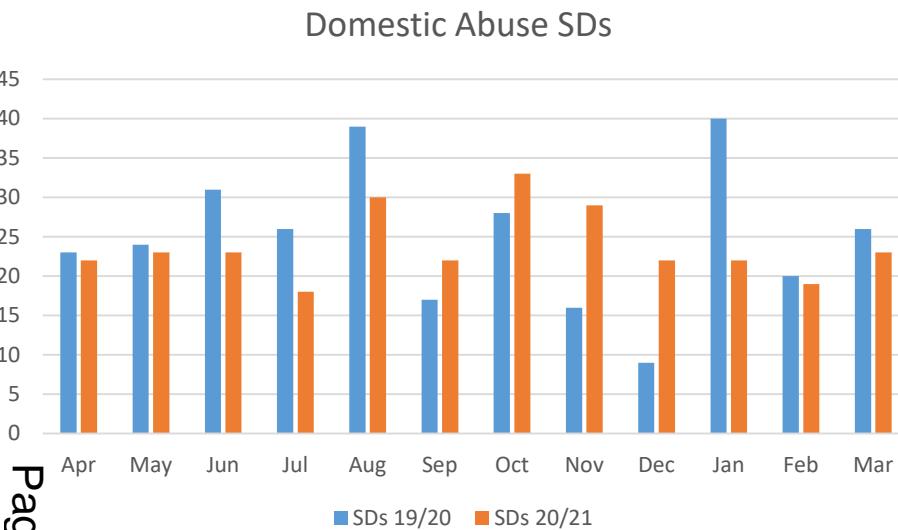


The FYTD burglary SD rate is 9.7%, and improvement of 5% on last year. It is below the 10% aspiration.

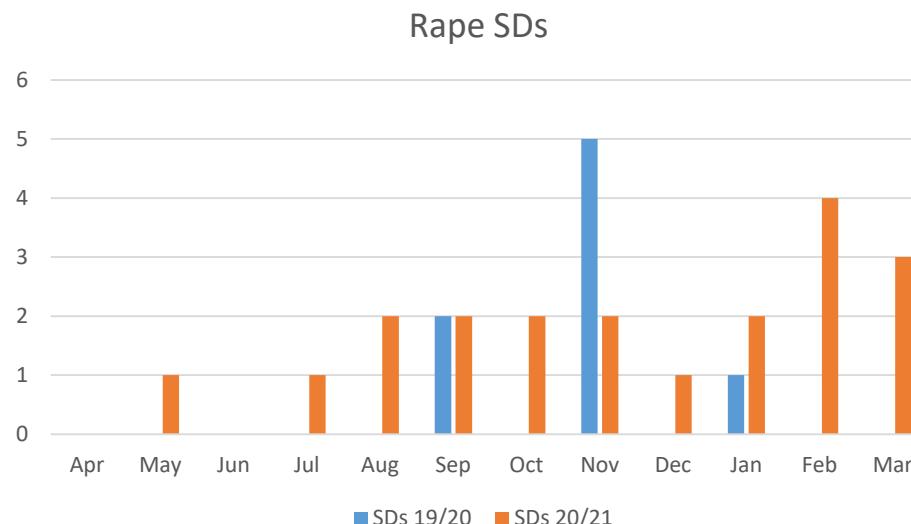
Burglary SDs



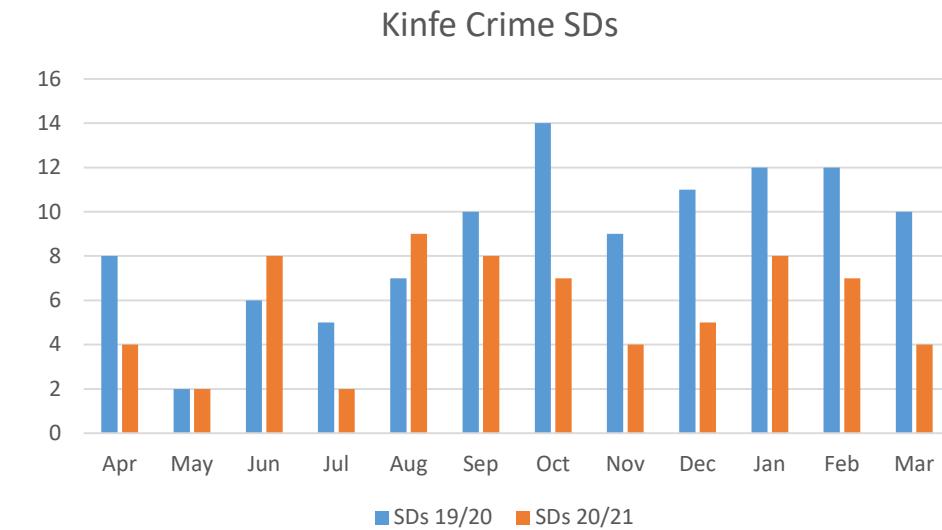
The FYTD domestic abuse SD rate is 13%, the same as last year. It is below the 30% aspiration.



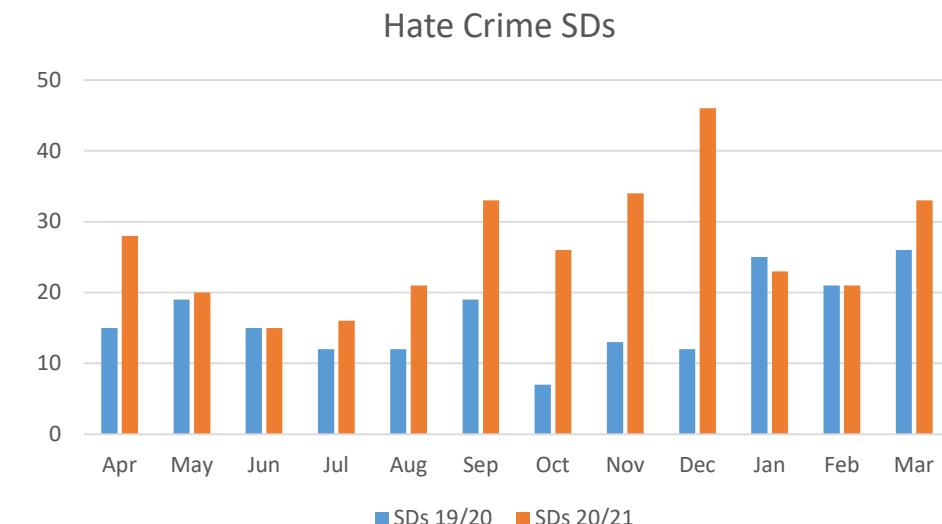
The FYTD rape SD rate is 6%, and improvement of 4% on last year. It is below the 10% aspiration.



The FYTD knife crime SD rate is 16%, and improvement of 7% on last year. It is below the 18% aspiration.



The FYTD hate crime SD rate is 21%, and improvement of 10% on last year. It is above the 15% aspiration.



Agenda Item 7

AGENDA ITEM No:



City of Westminster

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Thursday 8 April 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Reform of the Ward Budget Programme
Report of:	Lucy Glover, Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison (Acting)
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Communities and Regeneration
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Matt Gaskin, Senior Member Services Officer mgaskin@westminster.gov.uk , 07966 164556

1. Executive Summary

This report summaries a recent review of the Ward Budget Programme and asks the Committee to provide a view on the proposed action plan for the future of ward budgets.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- What is the Committee's view on the proposed short-term and long-term actions?
- Does the Committee have any other suggestions for how the Ward Budget Programme could be improved from their experience as members?

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Matt Gaskin on 07966 164556 or
mgaskin@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Full Ward Budget Programme Review Report – The Case for Change
Appendix B – Data Graphs and Analysis
Appendix C – Local Authority Case Studies

Background

The Ward Budget Programme was established in November 2007 under the council's Neighbourhood Programme. Since then, Councillors have had a pot to spend on community projects that benefit residents in Westminster and address local issues and priorities. The amount available to Councillors currently sits at £46,000 per annum.

To date, almost £12 million has been spent on over 2,000 projects. However, the programme was last scrutinised in 2014 and there is a case to be made about how this programme now meets Councillors' expectations and Westminster's voluntary and community sector needs. As a result, a full review of the Ward Budget Programme has taken place – please see Appendix A for the full report and Appendices B and C for supporting evidence.

It is clear from the evidence that stakeholders value the programme to improve the lives of Westminster residents. However, the research has highlighted issues and areas for improvement. This paper provides a draft action plan for reform in the short-term and the long-term, for consideration by the Committee. The full list of actions can be found in Appendix A.

Suggested short-term (pre-May 2022) actions

Promotion and Celebration

It is clear from the research that there is an issue with awareness of the programme and overall spend is on a negative trajectory. As a result, it is suggested that officers implement a wide-reaching strategy to promote and celebrate the programme to schools, charities, residents, amenity societies and community organisations. This will encourage a wider pool of applicants and, as a result, more Westminster residents will benefit from the scheme. Organisations will also be required to credit and acknowledge support from the ward budget programme when delivering their projects. Further, Councillors will receive updates in the form of case studies and opportunities to directly engage with organisations and their projects.

Streamlining the process

To ensure Councillors and applicants have the guidance they require to make the programme a success, it is suggested that officers devise a guidance note for Councillors covering common issues such as conflict of interest, repeat requests for funding from the same organisation and for-profit organisations. Officers will proactively offer thoughts to Councillors on applications, draft detailed 'step-by-step' application FAQs and ensure a clearer timeline for applicants to ensure accountability. Councillors will be encouraged to get involved with the quality

assurance of project delivery through the sharing of monitoring information which will be closely scrutinised by officers.

Suggested long-term (post-May 2022) reform

- **Paying 50% of funds upfront** to organisations rather than the current system of paying in arrears subject to suitable monitoring, which can prevent smaller organisations from applying.
- **Reducing the size of the budget pot** - Evidence clearly shows that there has been a gradual decline in the amount of money spent and the numbers of projects supported through the programme.
- **Changing the name of the programme to ‘Ward Community Fund’** as part of a re-branding exercise to clarify the purpose of the pot.
- **Introducing an online portal for stakeholders to review applications.** This interactive approach would empower Councillors to plan, increase transparency and reduce office administration.
- **Encouraging, but not limiting, applications based on ‘themes’** such as improving air quality or greening. These would be decided by Councillors in each ward and would be advertised to applicants on the ward budget webpages and be adapted to meet the Council’s priorities.

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City of Westminster

WARD BUDGET PROGRAMME REVIEW - THE CASE FOR CHANGE

Matt Gaskin, Senior Member
Services Officer,
mgaskin@westminster.gov.uk



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Future Programme Goals (post-May 2022).....	11



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Executive Summary

This report presents a review of the Ward Budget Programme that has consisted of desk-based research, discussions with other local authorities and quantitative and qualitative analysis through surveys and focus groups. It is clear from the evidence that stakeholders value the programme to improve the lives of Westminster residents. However, the programme was last scrutinised in 2014 and there is a case to be made about how this programme meets Councillors' expectations and Westminster's voluntary and community sector needs in 2022 and beyond.

This report sets out ideas for reform in the short-term (pre-May 2022) and the long-term (post-May 2022). Short-term actions include:

- The implementation of a wide-reaching strategy to **promote and celebrate** the programme; and
- **Streamlining the process** through clearer guidance and closer Councillor awareness of projects.

Proposals for long-term reform include:

- **Paying funds upfront** to organisations rather than in arrears, changes to the size of the budget pot and improved clarity over funding criteria;
- **Re-branding** the programme through a name and process change;
- The introduction of application '**themes**' and an **online portal** for stakeholders to review applications;

This report seeks to obtain the views of the Policy and Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration by June 2021 with the intention of presenting a further report towards the end of 2021 with a draft of what a revised programme might look like. It is suggested that a final report be presented in March 2022, with any changes for implementation to be made after the local elections in May 2022.

Background

The Ward Budget Programme was established in November 2007 under the council's Neighbourhood Programme. From 2008 to 2010 a pilot scheme was run, with each ward receiving £100,000 per annum to allocate to address local issues and priorities, drawing on their local knowledge and resident engagement through Area Forums.

The programme officially began in the 2010-2014 electoral cycle with £50,000 per annum being awarded to each ward. This was reduced to the current amount of £46,000 per annum in January 2011.



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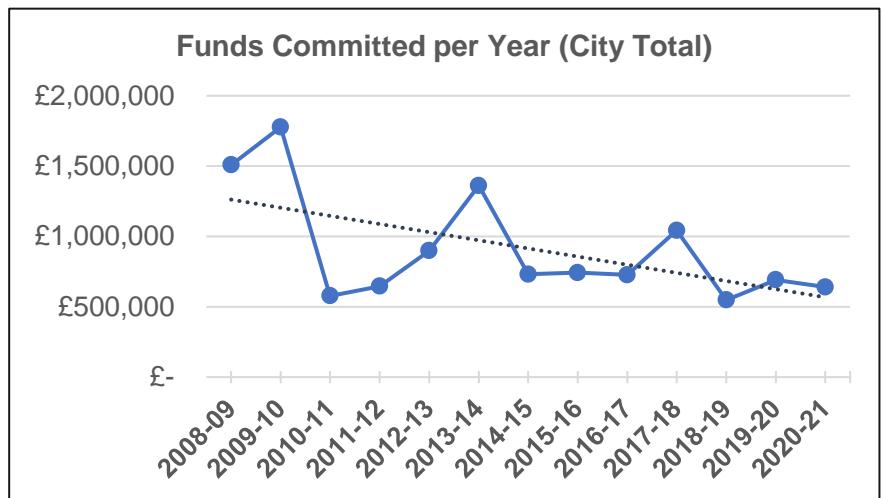
At the end of the 2010–2014 cycle, any unspent funds were placed back into the Council's reserves, whilst at the end of the 2014–2018 cycle the Leader, at the time, decided to establish the MyWestminster Fund for the reserves, which amounted to approximately £500,000.

To date, across the whole programme almost £12 million has been spent on over 2,000 projects.

Data Analysis

This graph demonstrates an overall decline in funding committed to ward budget projects since the programme began, by 55%.

The evidence suggests that for the current 2018–2022 electoral cycle, spend and the number of projects funded will not reach the levels of previous years, despite one year remaining in the electoral cycle.



Further, research shows that there has been a steady decline in the number of projects benefiting from ward budget funding, by 38.5% since 2010. The average amount committed to projects has steadily increased, for single as well as multi-ward (joint) projects, which suggests a higher spend on a lower amount of projects.,.

Spend levels are therefore on a negative trajectory which demonstrates that there is scope for the programme to be reformed and communicated to a wider audience.

Please see Appendix B for more information on this analysis.

Focus Groups and Surveys

Online focus groups took place between 25 January and 5 February 2021, with both Councillors and community organisations, who have been involved in the ward budget process. In total, fourteen Councillors and twenty representatives from organisations, who had received ward budget funding participated.

The focus groups ran with support from the Research and Insight team to ensure independence and quality of data. The workshops used a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) model to collect and organise ideas for the



City of Westminster

purpose of this report. Additionally, surveys were sent to all Councillors and over 100 organisations who have applied for funding over the last 3-4 years.

Councillor Feedback

Overall, Councillors supported the programme, agreeing that it empowers community leadership, does a great deal of good for residents to meet local needs and that it can be lifeline for small groups during difficult times. Councillors generally agreed that funding is accessible, with relative ease, for applicants and they found it simple to identify different activities and determine the different levels of finance required whilst still allowing for a high degree of creativity.

Many Councillors highlighted the importance of transparency and providing good value for money for residents whilst outlining the need to ensure that all organisations, big or small, are given an opportunity to pitch their projects. They felt that organisations should continue to be supported from a cross-collaborative team of Councillors and officers but the experience of finding projects to fund varied across the wards.

The majority of respondents to the survey, of which there were 21, answered positively to how they felt the scheme operated overall on a scale of 1 to 10 – with an average of **7.1**.

Four common themes were highlighted from the focus groups and surveys:

- Promotion
- Councillor project involvement
- Application process and funding
- Relationship with officers

Promotion

There was a general feeling amongst Councillors that more should be done to advertise and promote the programme. This would encourage more applications to come forward rather than relying on Councillors seeking out ideas for funding or by word of mouth.

A majority of respondents to the survey answered ‘No’ to ‘*Do you think the Ward Budget Programme is sufficiently promoted and communicated to local communities in Westminster?*’.

It was suggested that promotion could be improved through, for example, the Westminster Reporter including case studies and application details, the schools’ bulletin, local newsletters, amenity society communications, ward surgeries, targeted emails to local organisations, bulletins and end-of-year events.



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Other ideas put forward included holding open sessions on the programme for residents and organisations and promoting through the Open Forums. It was felt that there should be clearer signposting on the website and Councillors would benefit from information on charities and organisations in their wards to help enable them to seek out funding opportunities. It was felt that the City for All pillars should be advertised widely if we are asking that projects line up with these.

Councillors asked for more case studies to be provided to encourage best practice and it was mentioned that the scheme should be promoted with more ward-focussed branding.

Councillor project involvement

Councillors noted that they would like to be more involved with the follow-up phase of projects and suggested introducing a quarterly progress or end-of-project evaluation report, including sharing the outcomes of projects with photos, feedback from applicants and information on the impact of the project.

Councillors wanted to be more aware of projects in order to celebrate successes, which would aid in promoting the programme, as they often lose track of projects once they have been approved.

Closer Councillor involvement with regards to in-depth monitoring and attending applicant events was also raised.

Application Process and Funding

Some Councillors felt the process is skewed towards applicants who are more experienced in applying for grants. One respondent felt that the process was a 'tick-box' exercise that has drifted from its initial scope where Councillors would have control of what comes forward; they feel it has now become a 'free-for-all'.

In the discussions Councillors raised that it is not always feasible for smaller organisations to pay upfront for projects and that they would instead benefit from a partial or complete upfront payment of funds, in contrast to the current system which pays in arrears. Further, it was felt that the system does not always handle joint ward projects well, due to their complexity.

There was also a feeling from Councillors that the application form could be simplified and there should be a question added which reads: 'is there another group that delivers a project similar to yours?' and requiring further details of dates/times of events planned. Further points discussed included:

- Smaller, disparate groups can be marginalised from the process due to not having a formal structure and leadership and would benefit from representatives to bring together resident concerns to reduce duplication and



City of Westminster

streamline community benefit. The COVID-19 pandemic is a good example of this happening.

- Organisations should be discouraged from relying on the pot as a source of funding.
- There was concern regarding split wards and party politics interfering with the process and a general call to consider all applications objectively regardless of political persuasion.
- Councillors were generally happy to take a leadership role to drive projects forward in their wards that they know intricately but there is scope to be more proactive.
- Themes to encourage applications on certain topics could be considered, such as air quality or obesity.
- A suggestion to allow residents to vote or influence the funding of community projects at community events. This is similar to the structures being developed at other councils. Please see Appendix C for an assessment of case studies at other London Boroughs.

Relationship with officers

In the survey, 52% of Councillors answered 'No' when asked if there was anything Councillors needed to assist them in reviewing applications, suggesting a mixed response to the effectiveness of officer support.

The general view was that officers are a valuable tool when it comes to exercising objective judgement for contentious proposals, acting as the point of contact for organisations to ensure anonymity if applications are rejected and getting answers to questions Councillors have from applicants. It is therefore important both parties are synchronised. However, it was noted that further officer scrutiny over applications and monitoring is required for quality control and that organisations would benefit from greater clarity and guidance over parameters of what they can bid for.

A request for detailed guidance on conflicts of interest was made and that there could be further officer input with regards to funding allocation advice for applications spanning ward boundaries. There was a suggestion that officers should prompt Councillors to scout out potential applicants early on in the electoral cycle, should offer advice when presenting applications and share more information with regards to recently approved budgets.

Community Organisation Feedback

Overall, community organisations felt that the programme offers a valuable and flexible opportunity to fund capital and revenue projects for the community with very few restrictions compared to alternative means of funding.

In the survey, of which there were 52 responses, the majority answered positively to how easy they felt the ward budget application process was, how easy the



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information on the website and application form was to understand and how easy the monitoring process was on a scale of 1 to 10 – an average of **7.13, 7.73 and 7.37** respectively.

There was a **54%/46%** split in favour of seeing further changes to the programme and **65%** answered ‘Yes’ when asked if the programme was sufficiently promoted to local communities in Westminster. It must be noted that the circulation of the survey tied in with the rollout of the new online application form which had previously been presented as a Word form.

There were six common themes to come out of the focus groups and surveys.:.

- Website and Application Process
- Funding
- Promotion
- Relationship with officers
- Councillor involvement
- Monitoring

Website and Application Process

Some organisations felt the forms and website were self-explanatory, had clear criteria for what could be funded, had good guidance and relevant questions related to grant applications. The new form and website were commended for being streamlined and simpler, but some less digitally-able would welcome continued access to paper forms. **83%** answered ‘No’ in the survey when asked if they encountered problems completing the application form, however responses were mixed in terms of its simplicity and the process time for an application.

Some respondents noted the clear decision timescales, speedy replies and valuable support from officers and Councillors alike.

However, some respondents believed the system to be bureaucratic, constrained to a stereotypical project and that the application form included irrelevant and repetitious questions. One respondent commented that they had to get into the ‘local government mindset’ to complete the form. Some felt there was a lack of simple guidance on how to complete the form which has led to time-consuming follow-up questions. It was raised that changes in officer contacts for the team has caused some confusion in the past and that a dedicated contact for each project would be preferred.

The organisations felt that it would be helpful to have clearer Council spending priorities, possibly linked to City for All, so that applicants could match their projects against these.

In terms of joint ward projects, it was felt that there can sometimes be complications which mean that it cannot only be time-consuming to gain approvals, but not



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knowing the addresses of attendees, to ensure an accurate resident benefit in advance, can delay claims. Points were raised regarding clarity of eligibility criteria to ensure this is consistent across all wards and there should be clearer guidance on how frequently organisations can apply for funding.

Funding

A widely expressed view was that smaller organisations struggle with payments made in arrears. Further, the process of receiving funding can be bureaucratic and daunting for smaller organisations not experienced in applying for grant funding. One focus group participant felt that organisations had to prove they did not need the funds to get the funds, which is not how the programme should run. Organisations felt that they would benefit from having more knowledge of what has (and has not) been funded in Westminster as a whole and there was concern over an inconsistent approach with match funding being requested by some wards but not others.

Promotion

Some respondents only found out about the scheme by word-of-mouth arguing that the scheme is not as well publicised as it ought to be for smaller organisations. They felt that the Council needed to be more proactive, even though this would lead to increased competition for funds. The ideas put forward were similar to the ones raised by Councillors, but some further suggestions for promotion included:

- OneWestminster and Young Westminster Foundation newsletters.
- Libraries, free press, adverts on WCC website and social media publicity directed at charities.
- Better annual reports of grants awarded available on the WCC website and regular updates of website case studies.

Councillor involvement

Organisations felt it was paramount that Councillors react swiftly to applications so that they can plan effectively and not be in a position of financial uncertainty. Experiences with decision turnaround times varied, ranging from weeks to months for them to be communicated depending on the ward or project. Clearer and more rigid deadlines would therefore ensure better accountability. Further, more involvement from Councillors in terms of project feedback would be welcome as organisations felt it was valuable to keep them engaged with the output of a project to build effective relationships.

Monitoring

Respondents noted that it was clear what monitoring information was required, that the process was straightforward, and that it acts as a beneficial exercise in helping organisations plan their projects. Some felt the process gets easier with time and



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officer support and although the evidence required is thoroughly scrutinised, this is to be expected in return for receiving public money. In the survey, the majority of respondents answered positively to how easy they felt the monitoring process was on a scale of 1 to 10 – with an average of **7.37**.

However, some did feel the process was bureaucratic and fiddly for new applicants. Some smaller organisations struggle to provide the level of monitoring necessary, arguing that it is not proportionate to the amount of funding received, and officer staffing changes have led to differences in the level of scrutiny and lost information, leading to duplication. If changes to a project are required this could cause delays if extra approvals are necessary, so some flexibility should be applied. Sometimes, monitoring is hard to acquire depending on the project, such as a live event, so it is not always clear what is acceptable.

Some felt there was room for improvement in terms of closer scrutiny of project outcomes, feedback from the Council in terms of how money is spent and summary reports at the end of projects which may streamline returning applications.

Recommendations

Short-Term changes (pre-May 2022)

➤ **Promotion and celebration**

It is clear from the research that there is an issue with awareness of the programme. Not only is underspend on a negative trajectory, Councillors and organisations alike felt the scheme could be better promoted to enable more organisations to have the opportunity to access funding to support local residents and to encourage healthy competition of funds to reduce over-reliance.

In addition to the recent webpage update which now includes clearer information, guidance and testimonials which will be updated regularly, officers will implement the following proactive plan to boost awareness of the programme:

- Regular adverts and case studies in the Westminster Reporter and community newsletters such as OneWestminster.
- A targeted social media and email campaign directed at schools, charities, amenity societies and other community organisations to promote the process and when funding has been awarded.
- Adverts in libraries, ward surgeries and the free press.
- The holding of year-end celebratory events, open sessions and focus groups for residents and organisations where the scheme can be discussed and to take advantage of increased community engagement.
- Better annual reports of grants awarded available on the website.



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- Regular officer prompts to Councillors to scout out applications early on in the electoral cycle.
- A requirement for organisations to acknowledge support from the scheme in all their project communications, as per Croydon Council's approach (as noted in Appendix C).
- Case studies in the Member Bulletin to provide Councillors with new ideas for funding opportunities that may be available in their wards.
- Feeding back outcomes of projects and sharing dates of events to Councillors to encourage participation and foster engagement with communities.

➤ Streamlining the process

To date, officers have added a monthly update of projects to the weekly Member Bulletin to share examples, revised the terms and conditions for funding, devised better guidance for applicants and designed a more concise project proposal form in order for Councillors to decide on applications. In order to support Councillors further, officers will do the following:

- Develop clear guidance on conflicts of interest (where a Councillor is involved with an organisation making an application) and what organisations can and cannot bid for.
- Provide more input with regards to joint ward applications and give advice when presenting applications to Councillors.
- Share monitoring forms (completed by organisations at the end of their projects) with Councillors so they can be engaged in monitoring project success more closely.
- Carry out further scrutiny over applications through monitoring reports to ensure projects will succeed. An additional question “is there another group that delivers a project similar to yours?” will be added to the application form.
- Provide Councillors with information on charities and organisations in their wards which can be used to proactively seek out funding opportunities.

For organisations, officers will do the following:

- Devise a more detailed ‘step-by-step’ FAQ focused on model answers for questions on the application form to ensure new applicants and those less digitally-able are not put off by the perceived demands of the form.
- Develop a clearer and more rigid decision-making timeline of deadlines to ensure applications are dealt with promptly by both officers and Councillors and that there is clearer accountability.
- **Criteria for funding –** The scheme is designed to be accessible to organisations, and Councillors have flexibility in terms of what they can approve. This approach is supported by organisations, however there is scope to tighten the criteria for funding to ensure fairness and consistency across all wards. For-profit organisations are currently allowed to apply, subject to their projects benefiting local residents. However, there is the



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possibility of tightening the guidance for organisations on what can be funded to make it clear that not-for-profit organisations will be given first priority for funding pots.

Further, any restrictions on how many times organisations can apply should be detailed in any guidance produced. Inconsistent approaches to match funding was also raised by some organisations. However, this request ties in with the autonomous nature of the programme for councillors but the guidance could be clearer.

Future Programme Goals (post-May 2022)

Based on the evidence provided, this paper concludes by suggesting more widespread changes to the programme:

- **Paying funds upfront** – It was generally felt that smaller organisations struggle with the current system of all payments being made in arrears. Based on the case studies considered in Appendix C, it is more common than not for local authorities to provide all or a partial payment of funds upfront to support organisations in the delivery of their initiatives.

This change could have a beneficial impact in terms of the reach the programme has by encouraging smaller organisations, especially those who have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic, to come forward and deliver beneficial projects for the Westminster community. It would also encourage healthy competition for funds provided for by the programme. The requirement on organisations to provide suitable monitoring would still be in place.

- **Size of the budget pot** – Evidence clearly shows that there has been a gradual decline in the amount of money spent and the numbers of projects supported through the programme. As mentioned, there is scope for further promotion which could alleviate the underspend. However, with the data as it is at present, the amounts available to wards could be amended in the following ways:
 - i. Annual amounts provided by the pot for Councillors are reduced overall with the rollover process, across the electoral cycle, remaining.
 - ii. Budgets at the start of the electoral cycle remain the same, however if wards have not spent their initial allocations by the end of the first financial year, they are not automatically granted a further £46,000, rather, a proportioned amount.
 - iii. Funds do not roll over, so £46,000 (or a lower amount) is available each year, regardless of spend in previous years. This would



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reduce the evidenced larger spend in the final year of the electoral cycle and would encourage an ongoing commitment to the programme. Unspent funds would be allocated to Council reserves, at the end of each year.

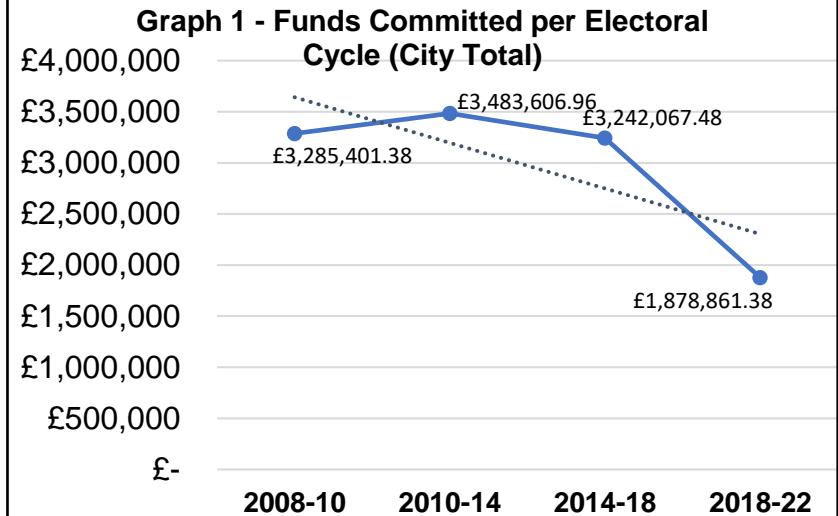
These models could act as incentives for wards to proactively allocate their funds in the period granted if there was a risk that the money would not be available in future years.

- **Themes for applications** – Themes based on Westminster priorities, such as air quality or greening, could be set and advertised to organisations applying for ward budget funds. This would enable local issues to be dealt with by targeted projects.
- **Re-naming the programme** – As part of a re-branding exercise to illustrate that this pot is for Councillors to spend on projects they deem suitable to improves the lives of residents, the programme could be re-named to something more direct in what it is for, for example, the Councillor Community Fund or Ward Community Fund. The examples of RBKC, Richmond and Southwark demonstrate the variety in what this funding pot can be called so it is punchy and clear.
- **Interactive online system** – An ambition of the programme involves facilitating an online system which provides interactive information to organisations on past and present projects funded by the scheme across Westminster using maps, ward-specific budget breakdowns and remaining allocations and an integrated system which allows for the live tracking of applications and councillor approvals. This would empower Councillors to plan, make the programme more transparent and streamline the application process, especially with regards to multi-ward applications which are seen to complicate the current system.

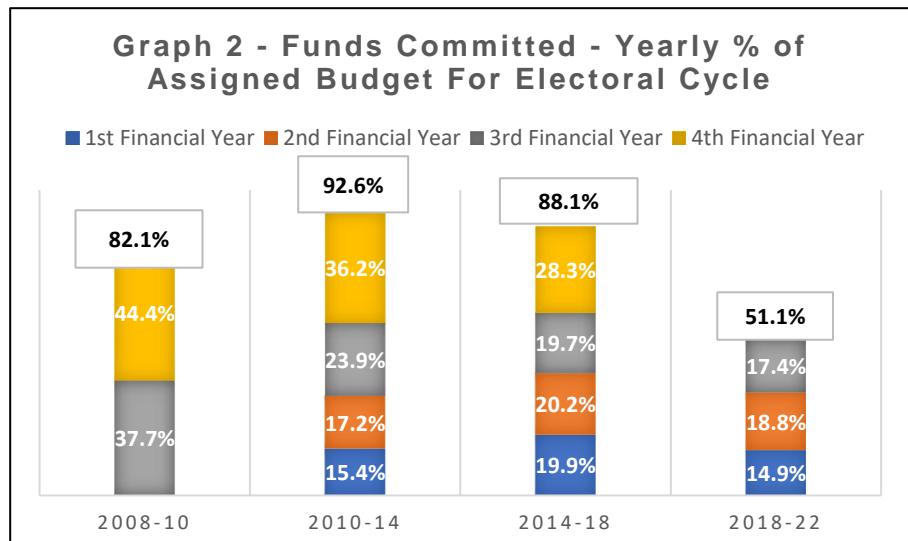
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Appendix B – Data Graphs and Analysis

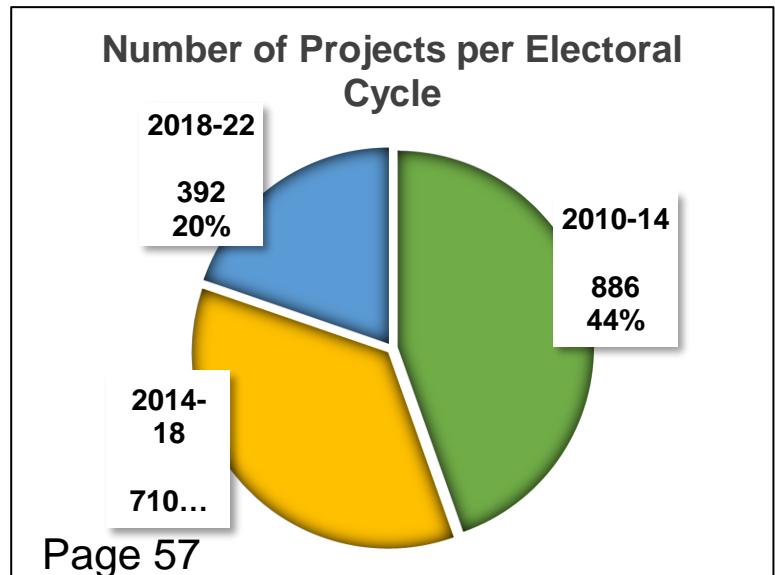
Graph 1 illustrates the total committed to ward budget projects since the programme was piloted in 2008 to Jan 2021. It shows a gradual decline in what Councillors are committing to ward budget projects, notwithstanding the one remaining year in the 18-22 electoral cycle and the higher amount provided early in the 08-10 cycle.



Graph 2 demonstrates this spend as percentages, showing a gradual increase in underspend since the 08-10 pilot cycle to the present electoral cycle. The total allocated budget has therefore never been spent.

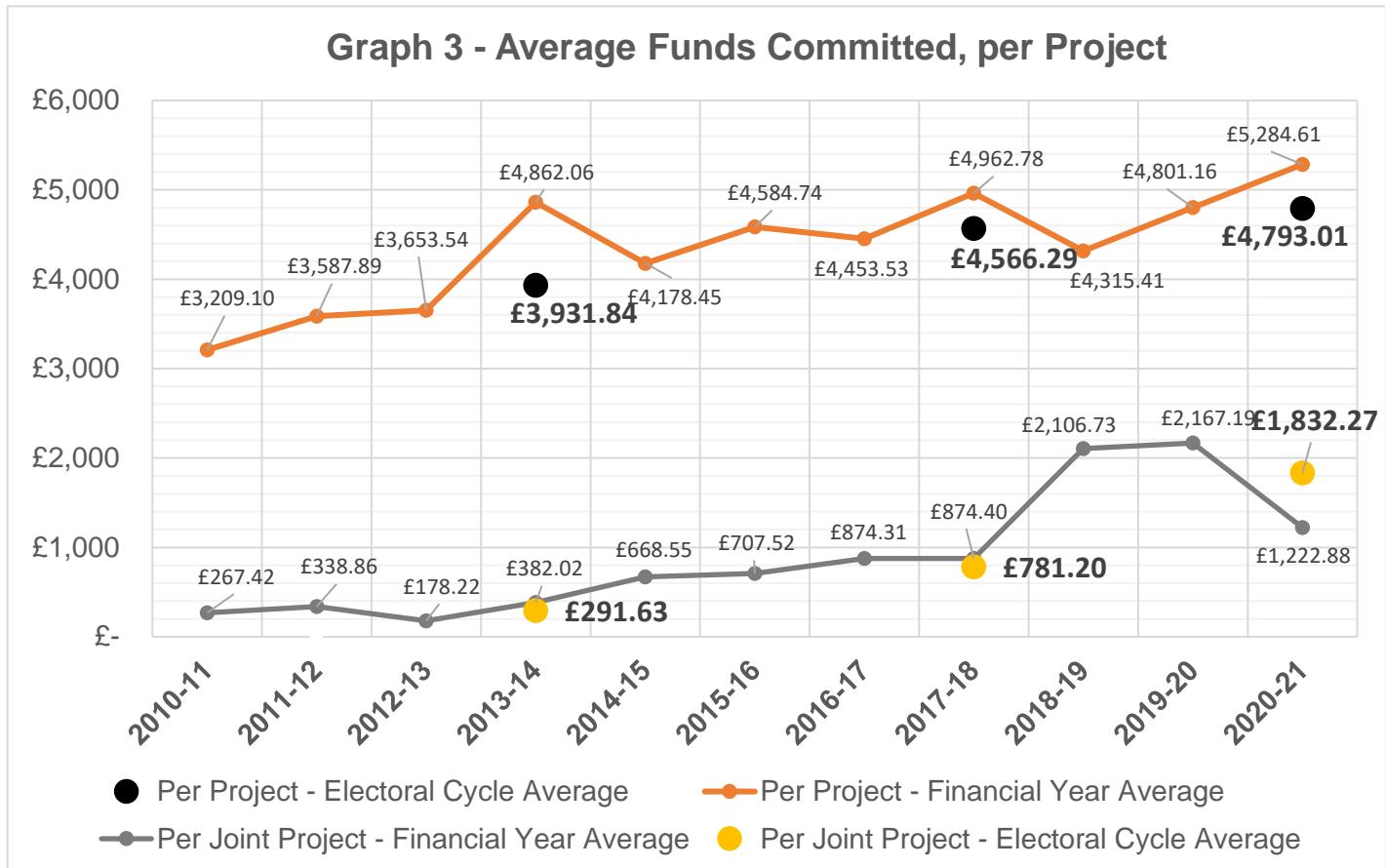


The pie chart demonstrates the number of projects funded since 2010. There is a notable drop in the number of projects from 10-14 to 14-18, and despite one year remaining in this electoral cycle, the totals for the financial years within this cycle are lower than all previous years. One can predict, therefore, that with the programme as it is, the 21-22 financial year will not see a big enough spike to overtake previous cycles.

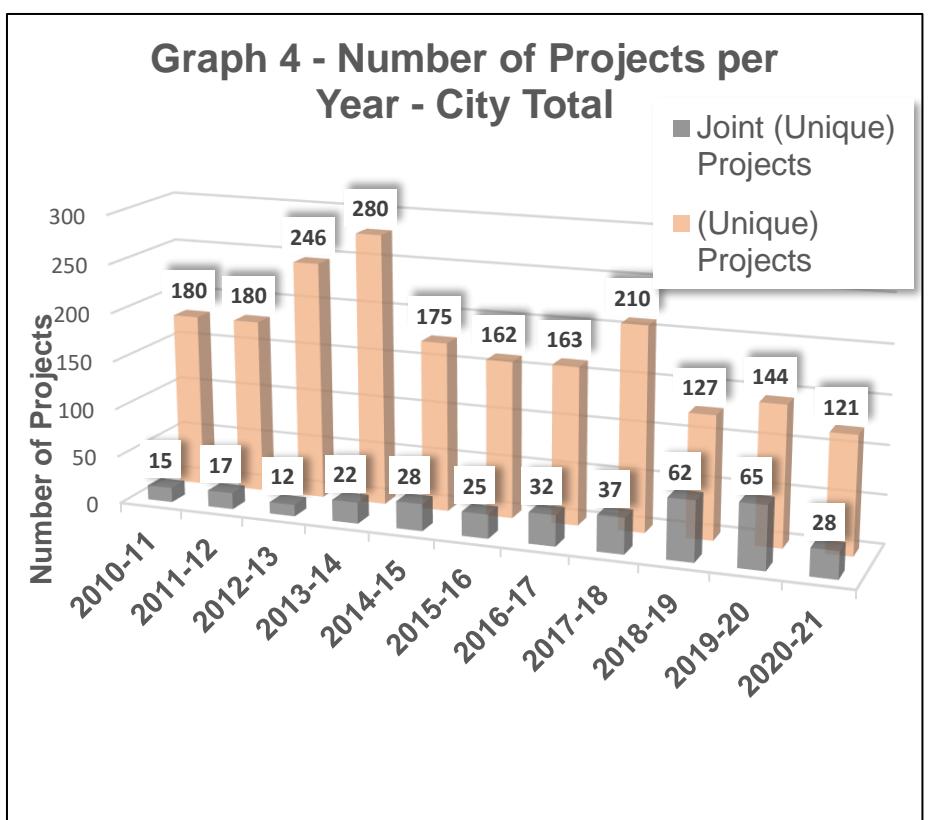


Further, Graph 3, below, demonstrates the average spend on a project, including cross-ward projects (joint projects), since 2010. This, on the whole, has

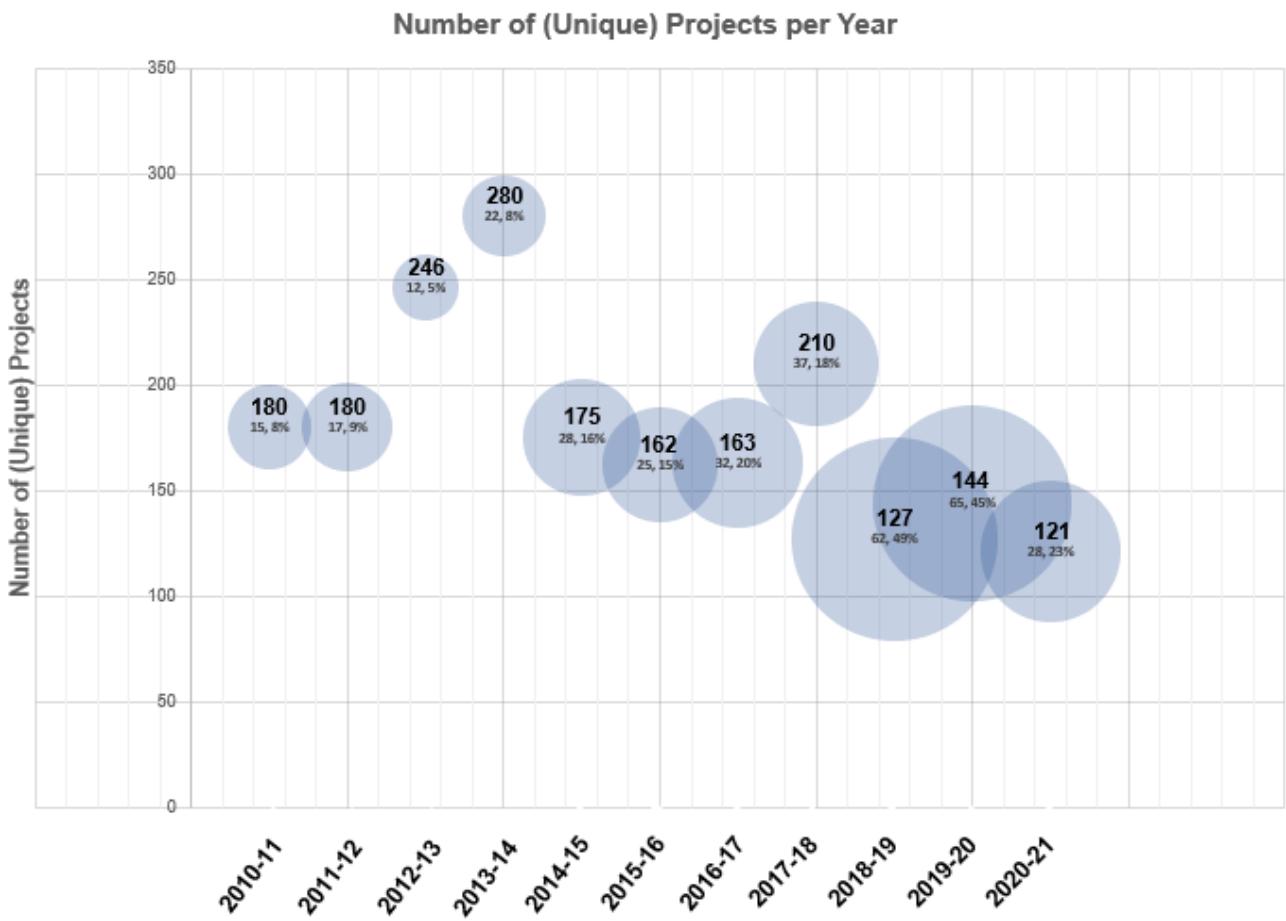
steadily increased since the programme began, despite the fact fewer projects have been supported.



Graph 4 illustrates the number of projects broken funded by year since 2010, up to and including January 2021. Of the number of total unique projects (in beige), the black bars indicate how many of those were joint (more than one ward) projects. The data, therefore, shows an overall steady increase in the number of joint projects funded through the programme, with almost 50% of all projects being joint in 2019-20.



To illustrate further, the size of the bubbles below are in proportion to the number of unique projects for each year, which are joint. In other words, the bigger the bubble, the more joint projects there were against the total number of projects funded that year. The bottom number inside the bubbles indicates the number of joint projects for each year and the percentage against the total number of projects. The data from early on in the current 2018-2022 electoral cycle shows that joint projects make up a considerable proportion of the number of overall projects funded.



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Appendix C – Local Authority Case Studies

- London Borough of Croydon
- London Borough of Southwark
- Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)
- London Borough of Richmond

London Borough of Croydon – an individually councillor-led scheme to empower backbench councillors and hold them accountable

Croydon's ward budget programme contrasts to Westminster in a number of ways, but mostly in that it is individually councillor-led. Rather than separating allocations out by ward, each of the 70 councillors receive £8,000 per year for community initiatives that benefit Croydon. Councillors receive training to make sure the money is spent in accordance with the principles of the scheme and sign a declaration to ensure, for example, that projects cannot be used for political lobbying purposes. Online applications go straight to councillors, rather than to officers. There are approximately 500-600 payments made per year, but very few over £10,000 and the pot rolls over indefinitely. There is a minimum spend of £250 and the average amount granted is approximately £1,000. Most funds are paid in arrears, however, unlike Westminster, there are instances where funds are paid upfront. The scheme prohibits funds to be spent on mainstream activities of an organisation.

This system empowers backbench members to take decisions and encourage projects that directly benefit their local area, as officer involvement is limited to providing advice and granting final approval. Councillors are responsible for agreeing priorities and seeking groups to come forward to apply. Individual pots alleviate problems created by politically split wards and makes councillors individually accountable for how money is spent. Some wards, such as Sanderstead, dedicate a proportion of their money to local Resident Associations, which empowers local community groups to decide on how best to spend this pot. There is a requirement on applicants to acknowledge support from the ward budget fund in any communications.

London Borough of Southwark – a structured programme consisting of multiple and themed funding pots

Under the umbrella of the Empowering Communities programme, Southwark holds twice-yearly meetings for five multi-ward areas across the Borough. These areas are made up of 4-5 wards. This is an opportunity for organisations to present funding applications from the below schemes and decisions are made by councillors at these meetings based on set guidelines. An application period is held annually between September and October. Officers review applications (which have deadlines according to the dates of the multi-ward meetings) before they are presented to councillors and manage the administration of the meetings. The pots that fall under the programme are:



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- **Cleaner Greener Safer** – a £1.8 million pot for capital projects. This pot is more ideas-based where specific officers investigate the feasibility of proposals. Past examples include playground renovations and tree planting.
- **Neighbourhoods Fund** – a £630,000 pot for revenue projects between £500 and £5,000 that start at the beginning of the financial year. This equates to each councillor getting £10,000, but decisions are made collectively. Approximately 370 applications are received and 220 funded. Businesses cannot apply and groups have to be constituted.
- **Devolved Highways Fund** – a fund for capital improvement to Southwark's highways and transport.

Southwark's scheme is therefore structured in terms of application rounds and assessments and decisions are made by larger areas rather than single or multiple wards, of which there are 23. Individual wards meet 3-4 times annually to promote the grants to residents and brainstorm ideas for community projects, therefore empowering community leadership and facilitating democratic engagement. Contrasting with Westminster, organisations are paid in advance. Suitable monitoring is required in order to demonstrate project success.

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC)

The City Living, Local Life scheme at RBKC, from the case studies considered above, is most closely aligned to Westminster's programme in terms of process. Predominately adopted from 2012, the scheme aims to build relationships and be approachable and accessible to community and voluntary organisations. The scheme provides each ward with between £21,000 - £30,000 to spend each year, depending on the size of the ward, on mainly short-term projects.

Key points of note include:

- Funds are paid to applicants upfront. Organisations are trusted and expected to provide monitoring of spend.
- Where local ward councillors would like this to happen, local area forums are being set up as a means to engage local residents and support decision-making at a local level. These are forums for ward councillors and residents to meet and discuss local issues, with the potential for residents to have a say on priorities which could feed into potential projects.
- Individual wards have autonomy with regards to specific rules under the umbrella of the scheme and what to approve. This is in place to represent the uniqueness of each area and for ward councillors to exercise a level of discretion over what they deem to be a priority in their ward.
- Profit-making organisations are not considered for funding and the scheme is not for salaries or to support ongoing organisation costs.



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London Borough of Richmond

As part of the rolling Local Area Fund which started in June 2020, each ward, of which there are 18, has £10,000 to spend on local initiatives. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has made this scheme even more necessary and the scheme welcomes applications that focus on community rebuilding. The scheme is funded through Council as well as Neighbourhood CIL funding. Key points to note include:

- There is an ‘ideas’ stage prior to any formal application to ensure suitability and eligibility. Once the idea has been reviewed by officers and received support from at least one councillor, organisations will be invited to apply formally. All councillors in a ward need to approve at the formal stage for it to proceed. The final approval of grant awards is made by the Assistant Chief Executive.
- There is a minimum spend of £100 and no expectation of future funding.
- Individuals can apply providing they acquire a partner organisation who can hold their grant funds. Profit-making organisations can apply, but only for not-for-profit projects that benefit the local community.
- Organisations receive funding upfront and are required to submit evaluation forms so that the success of their projects can be recorded.
- ‘Community Conversations’, as part of Richmond’s community engagement initiative, are a forum where the Local Area Fund is communicated to local residents and communities and residents have an opportunity to influence priorities with their elected representatives.

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Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Date:	10 May 2021
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2020/21 Work Programme
Report of:	Lucy Glover, Acting Head of Cabinet and Committee Services
Cabinet Member Portfolios	Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration and Highways Cabinet Member for Housing Services
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Artemis Kassi akassi@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1. This meeting completes the cycle of meetings for this Committee for this municipal year. This report asks the Committee to discuss topics for the remaining 2021/2022 work programme.

2. Next meeting date for the 2021/2022 year

- 2.1 The next meeting date for this Committee 2021/2022 year will be on 9th June.

3. Suggested topics

- 3.1 The Committee requested to discuss topics for the work programme for the next municipal year, 2021/2022. Some suggested topics are:
 - Air quality
 - Rough sleeping
 - Modern slavery
 - Domestic violence

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Artemis Kassi.

akassi@westminster.gov.uk

BACKGROUND PAPERS
Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

COMMUNITIES, REGENERATION AND HOUSING POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

(CONSTITUTION approved 15 February 2021)

Eight (8) Members of the Council (five Majority Party Members and three Minority Party Members).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (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 Members for Communities and Regeneration and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- (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, which 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 (WSC).
- (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 whose services fall within the Committee's terms of reference.
- (j) To consider any Councillor Calls for Action referred by a Ward Member to the Committee.

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