



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Westminster Scrutiny Commission**

Meeting Date: **Thursday 26th January, 2023**

Time: **6.30 pm**

Venue: **Hybrid, MS Teams and Rooms 18.01-03, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**

Members: **Councillors:**
Patricia McAllister (Chair)
Melvyn Caplan
Paul Fisher
Angela Piddock
Rachael Robathan
Karen Scarborough
Jason Williams



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

Admission to the public gallery is by ticket, issued from the ground floor reception at City Hall from 6.00pm. If you have a disability and require any special assistance please contact the Committee Officer (details listed below) in advance of the meeting.

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Clare O'Keefe, Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor.

**Email: cokeefe@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 Legal & Democratic Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

3. MINUTES

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022.

(Pages 3 - 10)

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

(Pages 11 - 14)

5. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

(Pages 15 - 20)

6. WORK PROGRAMME

(Pages 21 - 30)

**Stuart Love
Chief Executive
18 January 2023**



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Westminster Scrutiny Commission** held on **Thursday 6th October, 2022**, Hybrid, MS Teams and Rooms 18.01-03, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Patricia McAllister (Chair), Melvyn Caplan, Iman Less, Angela Piddock, Rachael Robathan, Karen Scarborough and Jason Williams.

Also Present: Mark Chalmers (Prepare and Prevent Operational CONTEST Manager), Neale Coleman (Chair of the Future of Westminster Commission), Councillor Adam Hug (Leader of the Council), Stuart Love (Chief Executive), and Clare O'Keefe (Temporary Joint Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor).

1 MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Councillor Patricia McAllister welcomed Councillor Melvyn Caplan and Councillor Iman Less to the Committee.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that Councillor Iman Less was attending as substitute for Councillor Paul Fisher.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting on 20 July 2022.

3.2 RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record of proceedings.

4 POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATES

- 4.1 The Commission received a verbal update from the Chair of the Children and Adults, Public Health and Voluntary Sector (CAPHVS) Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Piddock. The Commission was updated on the following:

- The most recent meeting of the CAPHVS Committee concentrated on the Cabinet Member for Young People, Learning and Leisure's portfolio and discussed the Annual Youth Justice Plan and Out of School Provision.
 - The Members of the CAPHVS Committee acknowledged the breadth of the Cabinet Member Update and discussed homing in on particular aspects to facilitate deeper, rather than broader, discussions.
 - The meeting of the next CAPHVS Committee will focus on health and the Gordon Hospital.
 - The CAPHVS Committee aims to have a work programme which is flexible and responsive to current issues.
 - In light of the CAPHVS Committee identifying the International Baccalaureate as a topic of interest, the Chair has proposed to visit a local school and hold a meeting there.
 - There will be an Individual Member Study on LGBTQ+ Public Health by Councillor Williams (Chair of the Communities, City Management and Air Quality Policy and Scrutiny Committee) and this report will come to the CAPHVS Committee to be scrutinised.
 - The Committee will also be looking at how schools are going to cope with a short supply of funding.
- 4.2 The Commission received a verbal update from the Chair of the Communities, City Management and Air Quality (CCMAQ) Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Williams. The Commission was updated on the following:
- The most recent meeting of the CCMAQ Committee heard Cabinet Member Updates from the Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection, and the Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality.
 - The recent meeting also received reports on Gas Street Lighting Electrification and Environmental Enforcement.
 - The next CCMAQ Committee meeting will be focusing on the impact of local police.
- 4.3 The Commission received a verbal update from the Chair of the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration (CAHR) Policy and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor McAllister. The Commission was updated on the following:
- The meeting of the CAHR Committee scheduled on 19 September 2022 was postponed until 14 November 2022 due to the state funeral of HRH Queen Elizabeth II.
 - The postponed CAHR Committee will have a substantive item on major works.
 - The CAHR Committee on 18 October will have a focus on housing repairs.
 - The CAHR Committee has many issues that its Members would like to see on the agenda in the coming months and years, including: allocations systems and empty and void properties.
 - The Members of the CAHR Committee were noted to be committed, keen and enthusiastic.

4.4 The Commission received a verbal update from Councillor Less on behalf of Councillor Fisher for the Finance, Planning and Economic Development (FPED) Policy and Scrutiny Committee. The Commission was updated on the following:

- The FPED Committee will be considering, and scrutinising key decisions made regarding the Oxford Street District Programme within the next few months when a meaningful paper can be provided.
- The next meeting of the FPED Committee will focus on the Smart Cities Programme.

5 LEADER'S REPORT

5.1 The Committee received a written update from the Leader of the Council on forthcoming and current issues. The Leader verbally thanked Council officers for their efforts in the lead up to and during the state funeral of HRH Queen Elizabeth II. The Leader responded to questions on the following topics:

- The importance of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill 2022 to aid the work the Council undertakes operationally on business enforcement, especially if Companies House is reformed and owners of businesses are more easily identified. These reforms will strengthen the local economy.
- The scale of the operation, professionalism of officers and contractors, and limited disruption to businesses was commended. Officers will provide any feedback and learning opportunities to be taken into consideration for future major events in Westminster.
- Continuing to make the case at local and Government levels to Transport for London regarding the proposed bus cuts. Whilst the Council is not yet sure on the extent of any changes, clarity will be obtained in the near future.
- Developing relationships with the Government regarding the Westminster Against Dirty Money campaign and helping the Government by drawing attention to issues and sharing practical information with relevant agencies.
- The value of involving residents in Notting Hill Carnival arrangements, especially those made by the Housing and Events teams in regard to barriers. Where the series of post-Carnival engagement events were delayed by Operation London Bridge, the commitment to hold the meetings with various key stakeholders should be made a priority to ensure Council services are effective. As this was the first Carnival since the COVID-19 pandemic started, residents should have been engaged at an earlier stage.
- The importance of decisions under officer delegation going through the proper process. Whilst Members can comment on Cabinet Member decisions, there are a number of recent decisions which have rested with officer's delegated authority. Members can ask Cabinet Members for more information on those that sit under their portfolios if they wish.
- The importance of Cabinet meetings being scheduled to operate regularly after Operation London Bridge.
- The answering of questions in a prompt manner. There were questions raised at the last two meetings of the full Council as well as general enquiries to Council departments which have not been answered. Whilst the timeframe for

answers varies between colleagues, questions should be answered efficiently. Departments like the Housing Service and Public Protection and Licensing are often inundated with queries so Members are encouraged to raise specific examples as it will help the departments better manage enquiries.

- The value of having ward reports from local City Inspectors. This recently changed to an overall city-wide report which has the potential to be less useful, especially for those wards whose boundaries have changed or merged with other wards.
- How the £189,000 extended to the Citizens Advice Bureau will be spent by the service beyond increasing staff capacity to manage incoming queries.
- The cost of Operation London Bridge to the Council, including officer time, contractors and costs covered and reimbursed by Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. Veolia did an outstanding job at keeping Westminster clean.
- The importance of transparency of decision-making when adopting or rejecting the Future of Westminster Commission recommendations. As the Future of Westminster Commission is advisory, looking at a range of topics within different timeframes and subject to different resources, there has been regular information and advice fed back by the Future of Westminster Commission and the process of choosing recommendations will be transparent.
- The independent review of the COVID-19 response focusing on health and, in particular, the NHS vaccination rates and reliability of GP lists. Discussions are ongoing with officers regarding the shape and scope of this and how the Council interacted with other services and the Commission will be informed of this in due course.
- The review of policy concerning homeless households in the Fairer Westminster strategy. The Council would like to prevent residents who have a long-term connection to Westminster being moved out of borough and not having the opportunity to move back. The policy seeks to ensure that temporary accommodation standards are robust and the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee will be updated about the next steps in due course.
- The importance of continuity within the scrutiny function, especially when relating to Member attendance.

5.2 **ACTIONS:**

1. Questions from the Full Council meetings in June and September will be answered.
2. The Cabinet Members for City Management and Air Quality and Public Protection and Licensing will be advised of the potential negative effect a city-wide report from City Inspectors will have on ward Councillors.
3. Granular detail will be provided to Members on how the £189,000 extended to the Citizens Advice Bureau will be spent by the service.
4. Members will be updated on the timeframe, shape and scope of the independent review of the Council's COVID-19 response and its Chair.
5. The review of policy concerning homeless households in the Fairer Westminster strategy will go to the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee in due course.

6 FUTURE OF WESTMINSTER COMMISSION - UPDATE REPORT

6.1 The Committee received an overview of the Future of Westminster Commission from the Commission Chair, Neale Coleman. Neale Coleman responded to questions on the following topics:

- Meetings of the Future of Westminster Commission will be public facing by advertising not only by inviting audiences through the networks of the local centres hosting the meetings, but more widely.
- The Future of Westminster Commission has a broad scope and, whilst certain locations within the City of Westminster have been identified as priorities, the Commission should be looking at the City as a whole and ensuring all areas are being taken into account. The Commission is keen to integrate the work it undertakes and, in particular, regarding the 'place' stream of work which is looking at one area of the City and will have real benefit and provide lessons for other parts of the City. Furthermore, the drive to bring people together to work more effectively both in the public and private sector will ensure more is being done for people across the City.
- There are concerns about homeless applicants being placed out of borough. There is a need for greater ongoing support, information and advice for these households.
- Commission Members engaging with a range of officers across the Council.
- The Tenants Panel formed by collaboration between the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, the Chair of the Housing strand and officers responsible for resident engagement to identify people to join the Tenants Panel. The panel will help inform the housing review.
- The importance of education impacting all four strands of the Commission; the Fairer Representation strand broadly focuses on young people and the role of schools where more needs to be done to get young people's views.
- The need to reduce emissions from buildings in the City, which currently constitutes 86 percent of total emissions. A number of the big landowners and property interests in the City are being brought together, including the Head of Sustainability for the Crown Estate and Director of Sustainability and Innovation from the Grosvenor Estate, to discuss a range of initiatives.
- The importance of scrutinising any recommendations of the Future of Westminster Commission which are adopted by the Council.

6.2 ACTIONS:

1. More details of the Tenants Panel, its formation and split between tenants and leaseholders, will be provided to Members by the Cabinet Member for Housing Services when it has been formed.

7 EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLANNING REPORT

7.1 The Committee received an update from Mark Chalmers (Prepare and Prevent Operational CONTEST Manager) on the Council's Emergency Preparedness Planning. Mark Chalmers responded to questions on the following topics:

- The identification of vulnerable people who are not known to the Council and various agencies. It is a complex area, and the Council has joined up with other services and established systems to reach out to partners. The Council has a database of vulnerable people and there are Adult Social Care officers who knock on doors to check on residents. There is a lot of work ongoing regarding community resilience.
- The importance of helping residents affected by flash flooding through having a multi-agency plan was noted. In the immediate term, encouraging self-support and urging residents to stay with friends and family, or helping residents to find suitable alternative accommodation. In terms of ongoing support, Adult Social Care officers are trained to help those suffering from trauma.
- The possibility of Councillors receiving emergency training, for both during crises and after. There have been sessions held for Councillors which outlined what to expect from the Council, the role of Councillors in terms of preparedness and business continuity plans. Councillors have a role to encourage communities to build resilience and help support residents through recovery. Another training session will be scheduled.
- The relevance of the Commission receiving a twice-yearly report on the Council's Emergency Preparedness Planning was agreed considering the ever-changing environment of the 21st Century.
- The importance of emergency preparedness being both communicated to and actioned by Council staff. The COVID-19 pandemic raised an awareness across the Council and affected each service area, especially concerning business continuity. The intention is that this is built on and maintained with each service having their own business continuity champions to increase diversity in responses to challenges.
- The need to be proactive to prevent flooding, especially in relation to maintaining gullies in areas where flooding is a known issue. The rain in August this year on consecutive Wednesdays was exacerbated by early leaf fall and events like this are likely to worsen with the effects of climate change. The pan-London Flooding Group, hosted by the GLA, is attended by the Chief Executive in respect of the Council's London-wide resilience responsibilities and considering that Westminster was so badly affected by flooding in July 2021. There were proactive steps taken prior to rainfall in August as the Council were warned by the Met in advance about the heavy rainfall; more detail can be given on the steps that were taken and where.
- The usefulness of having different reports regarding protests, including where there are multiple planned on a particular day or time period. A risk-informed approach is taken where a watching brief on what is happening is produced.
- The importance of a prompt communication response in crises, especially during that of flooding. The communications response during the July 2021 floods was acknowledged as not being robust enough and this is being looked into in the Council's emergency preparedness review.
- Raising with housing associations the disappointment felt regarding their response to residents during the floods where the Council needed to step in to ensure adequate care was provided. Housing associations should have a fit-for-purpose emergency preparedness plan and take up financial aid offered to them. Whilst the issue of housing provider response will not be investigated as part of the Council's emergency preparedness review, it is part of a wider

piece of work and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development is also investigating home insurance for flood victims.

- The role of the fire brigade in evacuating immobile residents to places of safety and the Council's responsibility for humanitarian care.

7.2 **ACTIONS:**

1. Arrange another training session for Councillors will be held on emergency planning, to be delivered in-person and with interactive exercises.
2. Information regarding the steps that were taken, and where, regarding the preventative gulley clearing work in August will be shared.
3. Emergency Preparedness Planning will be scheduled again on the work programme in six months' time.

8 **WORK PROGRAMME**

8.1 The Westminster Scrutiny Commission reviewed the work programme and discussed the following:

- A report on the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances could be submitted as a written report to Members in January.
- The subject of participatory budget setting will be investigated as an item to bring to January's meeting.
- January's meeting will be moved from 12 January to 26 January as this will allow Members to receive the most up-to-date reports from officers, considering that a high percentage of officers take annual leave up to and over the festive period.
- The scheduled Future of Westminster Commission update in January should be postponed to the meeting in March which will enable the Leader of the Council and relevant Cabinet Members to be scrutinised on the decisions made from the Commission's recommendations.
- The Climate Emergency Implementation Annual Report should be included on the work programme when suitable.
- The Terms of Reference for the Commission should be updated in the Council's Constitution.

9 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

9.1 The Commission stated that the reports which are presented at meetings should be taken as read.

9.2 The Commission discussed alternating reports between the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

The meeting ended at 21:02.

CHAIR: _____

DATE _____



City of Westminster

Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date: 26 January 2023
Classification: General Release
Title: Chief Executive's Update
Report of: Stuart Love, Chief Executive

1. Cost of Living

- 1.1. One in four households (31,000) across the city are particularly at risk from the cost-of-living crisis. In response the Council has published a cost-of-living strategy, declared a cost-of-living emergency and, to date, invested £10 million in providing a far-reaching programme of support to help the most vulnerable households.
- 1.2. A table attached to this report sets out the support rolled out to date (see Appendix 1).

2. Affordable housing

- 2.1. The Council is committed to maximising the delivery of truly affordable housing across our housebuilding pipeline. To this end, Cabinet approved in late 2022 a rebalance of the 60:40 split in favour of intermediate rent housing to a 70:30 split in favour of social rent homes, prioritising their delivery on forthcoming schemes.
- 2.2. Following a review of the Council's existing developments it was decided by Cabinet that the planned market homes at 300 Harrow Road (61 homes) and Westmead (41 Homes) will now be delivered as affordable housing. With limited exceptions, all affordable homes of two or more bedrooms have now been reclassified as social rent and those with one bedroom as intermediate rent at no more than London living rent.
- 2.3. In addition to the benefits to individuals and communities, the creation of more Council owned social rent homes reduces the Housing Benefit burden to the local authority.
- 2.4. The Council has also introduced resident ballots, the successful outcome of which allows the Council to bid for Greater London Authority to enable the building of more social housing. The ballot result for the Church Street regeneration scheme was announced on 12 January 2023, with 73 per cent of residents voting in favour of the plans for sites A, B and C. The plans will transform three key sites in the Church Street neighbourhood, which will re-provide all existing 228 council homes and deliver at least 156 new council homes at social rent levels, create new jobs and training opportunities as well as new shops and community facilities.
- 2.5. A resident ballot for the Ebury Bridge regeneration scheme will open on 23 January 2023 and run for three weeks to give residents an opportunity to have their say.

3. Update on the budget process

- 3.1. The financial planning process comprises different elements of the Council's budget structure and includes:
 - General Fund services and council tax decision
 - Housing Revenue account and housing rent decision
 - Capital Programme
 - Dedicated Schools Grant and budget
- 3.2. The Budget Scrutiny Task Groups, a formal part of the Council's Scrutiny Function met in January over three meetings to review the budget proposals and provide feedback. Cabinet on 13 February will consider a set of reports that comprise the overall budget proposals for recommendation to approve at Full Council on 8 March.
- 3.3. As in previous years, a report setting out the financial planning framework was considered and approved by Cabinet in July 2022. This set out the external policy and financial factors that impact on the provision of Council services and Local Government Finance and set out some planning assumptions for the budget process ahead.

4. City Survey

- 4.1. Each year, the City Survey measures resident satisfaction and understanding of service use, and identifies local issues, concerns and priorities. It is a very rich source of objective data, which helps the Council to understand sentiment and performance across the city.
- 4.2. In 2022, 2,436 residents were interviewed. The sample size is statistically representative of our diverse resident demographic, and appropriate quotas were put in place based on age, gender, ethnicity and working status. Findings were also weighted to account for demographic over- or under-representation, whilst face-to-face interviews ensured the views of digitally excluded residents were captured. The robust statistical sampling means that these results are fully representative.
- 4.3. In summary, this year's results paint a very positive picture. 95% of residents are satisfied with the way that the Council is running the City. This is an unprecedented high and is 31% above the local government average. The extent to which residents feel involved in decision making is much improved, satisfaction with core services now exceeds pre-pandemic levels, and the number of residents reporting issues or problems in their local area has decreased. The survey also highlights the increased financial difficulties experienced by residents in the face of the cost of living crisis.
- 4.4. More detailed analysis of the survey will follow in 2023.

5. Our Voice – Staff Survey

- 5.1. The Our Voice survey is our annual staff survey which is focused on engagement, equity, diversity, inclusion, and wellbeing.
- 5.2. Over the past year, engagement levels have increased across the organisation by 3% to 77%. The independent organisation which administers the survey for us has advised that we are bucking the trend of most good organisations in all sectors which have seen a decline in engagement levels in 2022 following the

- pandemic. Our engagement scores are comparable with the best organisations in the world. This is important as there is clear evidence that the more engaged people are the better the service is that will be delivered.
- 5.3. Highlights from the results show 80% of staff are proud to work in the Council, 71% would recommend the Council as a great place to work, and feedback on questions regarding wellbeing and collaboration across teams has also improved.
 - 5.4. However, there has been an increase in reports of inappropriate behaviour in the workplace by 2% to 13% (previously 11%) which is of concern. 50% of those who said they had experienced inappropriate behaviour said that they reported it. This behaviour was most commonly from a manager in the same department or a colleague. 45% of those who experienced inappropriate behaviour noted it was from a manager/leader in the same department/team and 38% experienced this from a colleague. Nearly twice as many females as males experienced inappropriate behaviour in the last 12 months (124 vs 67) and those with a disability were more likely to experience inappropriate behaviour than those without.
 - 5.5. The council is working within teams and with our staff networks to understand what lies behind these results and will take all steps necessary towards the goal of ensuring no one experiences inappropriate behaviour whilst at work. A key focus is on identifying hot spots in the Council and ensuring leaders are accountable for improvements.
 - 5.6. The Council is also committed to equality, diversity and inclusion through the celebration and recognition of the contribution of staff in a fair and transparent way, with the Equalities Objectives supporting this work. We are also committed to meeting the standards set by the Tackling Racial Inequality Group, led by London Councils, which set a benchmark for progress and provide us with an opportunity to identify areas for further action and demonstrate commitment to driving long-term culture change.
 - 5.7. Several objectives have been set to ensure that the Council progresses towards becoming an anti-racist organisation including:
 - Setting targets to ensure that the organisation at all levels is representative of Westminster communities and seek to reduce pay gaps to zero by 2025. Additional analysis to unpick the common drivers of pay gaps is being led by Strategy and Intelligence, with support of People Services should policy solutions be required.
 - Publish an anti-racism commitment statement and charter
 - Produce a Racial Equity strategy and action plan in collaboration with our communities and partners, ensuring organisational accountability

6. Internal COVID review and independent assessment

- 6.1. A comprehensive internal review was undertaken between April 2022 and June 2022 to ensure lessons learned from the response to the pandemic are identified to shape future outbreak management and emergency preparedness. This involved each of the outbreak management teams undertaking a look back exercise to identify lessons learnt and produce updated outbreak management plans. Furthermore, the refreshed outbreak management plan was tested in a cross council table top exercise.
- 6.2. An independent review of the Council's pandemic response has also been undertaken to interrogate the findings of the internal review undertaken by the Council. The review is being undertaken by Professor Gillian Manthorpe CBE, Kings College London. The findings are due to be advised shortly.
- 6.3. The Council is also taking part in the national inquiry on the COVID Pandemic alongside all local authorities and NHS bodies.

Appendix 1: Table of support provided – cost of living crisis

	National funding	Council funding	Timescale
Household Support Fund Extension (range of activities such as free school meals to those eligible in the holidays, supermarket vouchers to older people and a local Hardship Fund)	£1.9m		April – September 2022
Household Support Fund 3 (range of activities such as free school meals to those eligible in the holidays, supermarket vouchers to households not benefiting from national support and a local Hardship Fund)	£1.9m		October 2022 – March 2023
Council Tax Rebate Scheme (discretionary element) – includes help to households not benefiting from the national scheme	£2.2m		April - November 2022
Food and activities in summer holidays		£240k	July – September 2022
Extension of Green Doctors energy advice service		£10k	June – September 2022
Extension of debt advice (Citizens Advice Westminster)		£189k	October 2022 – Sept 2023
Training / financial capability provision (Westminster Employment Service)		£83k	April 2022 – December 2023
School Uniform Fund		£85k	Until March 2023
Local Hardship Fund (top up)		£200k	From July – September 2022
Local Payment Support Scheme		£600k	April 2022 – March 2023
Healthy Winter Grants for organisations putting on a healthy meal/health promotion activity in a warm space		£200k	November 2022 – March 2023
Westminster council tenants Hardship Fund (for tenants in arrears)		£400k	From January 2022
Additional cost of living support for at least 3,350 vulnerable households		£1m	From December 2022
Further cost of living support for vulnerable households 2023/24		£1m	2023/24
Total	£6m	£4.007m	



City of Westminster

Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	Thursday 26 th January 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Community Participation
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	The Policy and Scrutiny Committee has requested an update on the work being carried out by the Communities Team around participation as well as an update on participatory budgeting.
Report Author and Contact Details:	Serena Simon Director of Communities ssimon@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report sets out the progress made on community participation and participatory budgeting as set out in the manifesto.
- 1.2 The paper provides examples of community participation being implemented across the council, thus reflecting the positive reaction to the Fairer Westminster commitment to include residents and service users in decision making processes. The paper acknowledges more work needs to be done to standardise best practice and increase the number of residents and service users being engaged to include particularly seldom heard voices.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1 Policy and Scrutiny Committee is requested to note:
 - The consultation process is underway for the Charter of Community Participation
 - The Council's approach to supporting improved resident participation
 - Developing the Resident Research Panel
 - Current examples of participatory budget setting

3. Background

- 3.1 The council has made a firm commitment to actively involve residents and service users in helping to shape the decisions made by the Council and to contribute to the development of services, plans and programmes alongside Council officers and local councillors. The Council has stated that they want to hear how local people wish to be engaged or involved and are

eager to listen to local people and other stakeholders before reaching a decision. This intrinsic commitment to involve residents and service users is set out in how we will build a Fairer Westminster within the Council's Fairer Westminster Strategy. The intention is to achieve this by the Council being committed to the following values:

- **Openness and Transparency** - Being honest and working together with community members on creating solutions to the issues that face us.
- **Partnership and Collaboration** - Working with our community, public, voluntary and private sector partners to ensure our work is as effective as possible. Our partnerships with communities are built and maintained through our Community Development team who deliver engagement events across Westminster, our Community and Voluntary Sector Partnerships team who oversee voluntary and community sector grants and supporting key partnerships such as the Food Poverty Network, and Westminster Connects that supports volunteering. Long lasting relationships are also built with our communities through our Sports, Leisure and Active Communities team.
- **Diversity and Inclusion** – Through our operational support offer we will build capability across the Council to better involve our diverse communities, especially those who have been seldom heard more in decision making, whilst also ensuring we effectively maintain relationships with those already engaged. This is not an overnight fix, developing tools and learning new skills will take some time to embed across the organisation. Our Equality Objectives set out how we will start using our data to understand how our communities are accessing our services to inform improvements in making our services accessible to all our communities.

4. Consultation and engagement delivery objectives

4.1 In line with the Fairer Westminster Strategy, there are several delivery activities to support resident involvement.

- Developing a Community Participation Charter.
- Introducing a Quality Assurance Standard and Quality Improvement Board for consultation and engagement.
- Developing tools to support different Council departments with their engagement work (including an Engagement Toolkit and engagement planning software)
- Promoting the use of residents' panels and steering groups throughout the council
- Creating a 'Register of Active Residents' this will be the overarching contact of all residents who have indicated they wish to be more involved with the council from Westminster Connects/Resident panels etc
- Develop a community capacity building programme to support our communities to become more effectively involved in local leadership & to better understand the workings of the council
- Participatory budgeting

5. Improving Quality of Engagement and Consultation

5.1 We recognise several challenges in the way in which consultation and engagement activities are undertaken across the Council. A deep dive engagement exercise was undertaken in spring/summer 2022, which identified some key areas for action to take place:

5.2 Residents as part of a city-wide listening exercise conducted with reps from Amenity groups, Neighbourhood forums, residents' associations, young people and the Voluntary/community sector in Jan/Feb 2022, told us amongst other key points, that they would like to be more involved and to be able to see, in advance what major consultations were planned. There are several workstreams aimed at improving how we involve residents, which include:

- Creating an online consultation hub so that residents can see what consultations are planned and how to get involved.
- Consulting on a 'Charter for Community Participation' to understand how communities would like us to engage with them. The survey will inform wider principles to be applied to some co-production work with residents to develop a set of key principles for participation;
- Building relationships with our communities and key stakeholders through our Community Development Team, Sports Leisure and Active Communities Team and Voluntary and Community Sector Partnerships team.
- Building capacity through our commissioned provider 'One Westminster' that provides support to the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Through our Community Investment Strategy to improve how we allocate grant funding to support the Voluntary and Community Sector.
- Development of a geographically and demographically diverse resident research panel to involve residents in consultations by issue or location. In person and online recruitment has led to over 200 members being on this panel.
- Developing an overall 'Register of Active Residents' who wish to get involved in participation activities. Westminster Connects already holds a register of residents interested in volunteering and there are other active residents. These will be extended to include residents interested in participating in other ways.

5.3 Our research has also identified a need to support the different teams doing engagement and consultation across the Council. There are a number of workstreams to support this change including:

- The Centre for Excellence which launched in 2022 to develop staff capability around engagement and consultation. This includes Masterclasses, virtual resource hub and a community walks programme to support staff to better understand the communities we serve
- Work with the consultation institute to ensure best practice. The consultation institute is an expert body that can provide access to best practice resources to support the development of a council consultation toolkit
- A Quality Improvement Board, chaired by the Executive Director for Innovation and Change, to review Consultations and Engagements prior to them going live.

5.4 The Communities Department also run ongoing events to engage and involve the local community such as around International Womens day, Black history month, Southeast Asian heritage; events with a health focus, those with a focus on Men, health and employment as well as for young people. 'Dance Westminster' involving disabled people in a high-profile dance competition and Islamophobia awareness month events with local businesses.

Examples of participation carried out:

The resident panel has completed over 6 distinct projects already:

- Surveys have enabled residents to directly influence the Winter in the City priorities, including allocation of funding by clarifying geographic differences in demand for warm spaces.
- Helped define the Children and Young People's Plan priorities.
- Supported the Active Communities survey to be more representative of the general population.
- Focus groups and discussions have enabled resident input into the Planning Statement of Community Involvement.
- Provided Accessibility and Usability input into the Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan due to be published February 2023.

Residents who participated in discussions so far have agreed that the research topic was interesting, want to take part in future research and generally had positive feedback.

The Council has benefitted from residents' insights for the project and enjoyed working together to build greater trust and understanding between the council and residents.

6. Participatory budgeting

6.1 Participatory budgeting is a form of resident participation in which residents are involved in the process of deciding how public money is spent. Often the participatory budgeting exercises are delivered as part of an event allowing community members the opportunity to take part in deciding what community groups and projects should receive funding through a public voting system. This approach gives residents decision making powers.

6.2 Several neighbouring authorities are using participatory budgeting such as Brent who use this for community grant making (£2.5m) and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea who allocated specific funding (£1m) to projects to support economic and wellbeing grants to residents impacted by Grenfell.

6.3 None of the boroughs we looked at for this report are using this method to review their overall Council budget, each one has focussed on involving communities in decisions about community grants programmes.

6.4 The Communities Department is already implementing some participatory budgeting in Westminster and will seek to widen the reach and principles of these opportunities to more locations.

Some examples of community grants which are based on the principles of participatory budgeting are the Church St Neighbourhood Keepers fund (programme finishes March 2023)- this was a community initiative developed in the context of the regeneration programme. Community members were involved in the planning of the grant programme, advertising, involvement as panel members to consider the grant applications and were able to input into the final decision as to grant allocation. Delivering this programme aligned to these principles brought about positive outcomes, and the fact that local people were involved in decisions for their neighbourhoods was a tangible expression of civic leadership.

Building on the principles showcased above in NK, we piloted the Community Priorities grants programme 2022/23 £300k, - funded by Public Health. The aims of which are to

understand what the priorities for our residents within neighbourhoods are and how we can support the building of community resilience to deliver successfully on those and the interlinked improvement of public health outcomes through a community grants and capacity building programme.

The pilot initially started in 4 wards in the North and generated much learning which will now be incorporated into the wider grants programme plan to expand across the city into other areas of need. (Further details will be provided at a later date in terms of timescales and areas).

Report Ends

This page is intentionally left blank



Westminster Scrutiny Commission

Date:	26 January 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2022/2023 Work Programme
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Cabinet Member Portfolios:	Leader of the Council
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Clare O’Keefe cokeefe@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1. This report requests the committee members to consider the work programme for the 2022/2023 municipal year.

2. Meeting dates for the 2022/2023 year

- 2.1 The Committee is advised that the last scheduled meeting date for the 2022/2023 year is:
 - 28 March 2023.

3. Suggested topics

- 3.1 The Committee’s agenda for the meeting on 26 January meeting includes a report on Community Engagement. The Committee is therefore asked to reflect on and discuss the suggested work programme for the March meeting.
- 3.2 The Committee may also wish to consider items for the 2023/4 municipal year.

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Clare O’Keefe.

cokeefe@westminster.gov.uk

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference
Appendix 2: Work Programme
Appendix 3: Action Tracker

WESTMINSTER SCRUTINY COMMISSION

COMPOSITION

7 Members of the Council (4 nominated by the Majority Party and 3 by the Opposition Party) but shall not include a member of the Cabinet.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- (a) To carry out those duties assigned to the Westminster Scrutiny Commission as set out in the Constitution.
- (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 the Policy and Scrutiny procedure rules.
- (c) To be responsible for the management and co-ordination of the Policy and Scrutiny function.
- (d) To assign tasks to the most appropriate Policy and Scrutiny Committee, where the issue does not sit within the terms of reference of a particular Policy and Scrutiny Committee.
- (e) To scrutinise the work of the Leader of the Council including at public Question and Answer session(s).
- (f) To approve the Annual Report of Policy and Scrutiny activity, as required under the Constitution.

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 2 – Westminster Scrutiny Commission

ROUND 4 28 March		
Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Policy and Scrutiny Committee Updates	The Commission to receive verbal updates from the Chairs of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees.	N/A
Leader of the Council Q&A	To update the Scrutiny Commission on key areas of work within its remit and Leader's priorities.	Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of the Council Stuart Love, Chief Executive
Workforce update	To present to the Scrutiny Commission a report which brings together the staff survey results, staff turnover, diversity and inclusion and the refreshed Council vision.	Councillor Adam Hug, Leader of the Council Lee Witham, Executive Director of People Services
Emergency Preparedness Programme	To review the Council's Emergency Preparedness.	Mark Chalmers, Prepare and Prevent Operational CONTEST Manager
Work programme	To review the work programme ahead of the next municipal year.	Clare O'Keefe, Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

Unallocated items – this may either be substituted in for a substantive item elsewhere in the year or may be rolled over for future municipal years

Annual Scrutiny Report	To update the committee on key areas of work within its remit that has been undertaken over the last municipal year (22 June 2023).
Policy and Scrutiny Review	Following the review undertaken by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny, the Commission will consider options to improve the Council's approach to Policy and Scrutiny and agree recommendations for implementation (22 June 2023)
Future of Westminster Commission update	To consider the work undertaken and recommendations of the Future of Westminster Commission (22 June 2023).
Emergency Preparedness Planning	To review the Council's Emergency Preparedness (5 October 2023).
Air Quality Action Plan	To consider the Council's Air Quality Action Plan (5 October 2023).

Fairer Westminster Strategy	To review progress against the Council's delivery plan for Fairer Westminster (14 December 2023).
Public Affairs and Partner Engagement	A review of the Council's public affairs priorities and approach to partner engagement.
West End	To consider the West End, including the Oxford Street Programme.
Pay Policy Review	To review the Council's Pay Policy.
Climate Emergency Programme	To receive a progress update on the Climate Emergency Programme.

Appendix 3 - ACTION TRACKER
Westminster Scrutiny Commission

20 July 2022		
Agenda Item	Action	Status/Follow Up
Item 4 Leader's Update	That an annual report would be presented to the Cabinet on the Council workforce which will, in turn, be presented to the Committee.	Complete
	That the new candy store near Marble Arch as mentioned by Cllr Scarborough would be investigated.	In progress
	That the timelines for regeneration schemes, like Ebury, would be checked and if the timelines had changed from what was initially stated then the Commission will be informed.	Complete – Leader agreed in Committee to keep under review
	That officers would look at what more the Council can do to expand access to out-of-borough residents to schemes they are entitled to.	Complete
	That information on the remuneration of Future of Westminster Commission Chairs would be provided offline to Members of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.	Complete
	That an update on the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances would be shared with the Finance, Planning and Economic Development Committee and a discussion would take place between Cllr Fisher and Cllr McAllister to agree how this topic could be managed between that committee and the Scrutiny Commission.	Complete

6 October 2022		
Agenda Item	Action	Status/Follow Up
Item 5 Leader's Update	That questions from the Full Council meetings in June and September are answered.	Complete
	That the Members for City Management and Air Quality and Public Protection and Licensing will be advised of the potential	Complete

	negative effect a city-wide report from City Inspectors will have on ward Councillors.	
	That granular detail on the £189,000 extended to the Citizens Advice Bureau will be spent by the service.	Complete.
	That the Commission will be updated on the timeframe, shape and scope of the independent review of the Council's COVID-19 response and its Chair.	A report has been completed and an update will be given at 28 March meeting.
	That the review of policy concerning homeless households in the Fairer Westminster strategy will go to the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee in due course.	Complete
Item 6 Future of Westminster Commission Update	That more details of the Tenants Panel, its formation and split between tenants and leaseholders, will be provided to Members by the Cabinet Member for Housing Services when it has been formed.	Complete
Item 7 Emergency Preparedness Planning Report	That another training session for Councillors will be held on emergency planning, to be delivered in-person and with interactive exercises.	Complete
	That information regarding the steps that were taken, and where, regarding the preventative gulley clearing work in August will be shared with Members.	Complete
	That Emergency Preparedness Planning will be scheduled again on the work programme in six months' time.	Complete
Item 8 Westminster Scrutiny Commission Work Programme	That a report on the impact of COVID-19 on Council finances could be submitted as a written report to Members in January.	Complete – the Chair confirmed it would be best going to the FPED P&S Cttee.
	That the subject of participatory budget setting would be investigated as an item to bring to January's meeting.	Complete
	That January's meeting will be moved from 12 January to 26 January as this will allow Members to receive the most up-to-date reports from officers, considering that a	Complete

	high percentage of officers take annual leave up to and over the festive period.	
	The scheduled Future of Westminster Commission update in January should be postponed to the meeting in March which will enable the Leader of the Council and relevant Cabinet Members to be scrutinised on the decisions made from the Commission's recommendations.	Complete
	That the Climate Emergency Implementation Annual Report should be included on the work programme when suitable.	Complete
	That the Terms of Reference for the Commission should be updated in the Council's Constitution.	Complete

This page is intentionally left blank