City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title:	**Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee**
Meeting Date:	**Thursday 4th May, 2023**
Time:	**7.00 pm**
Venue:	**Rooms 18.01 & 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP**
Members:	**Councillors:**

Concia Albert	Ralu Oteh-Osoka
Paul Fisher (Chair)	Ian Rowley
Sara Hassan	Paul Swaddle
Patrick Lilley	

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

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

If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor. Email: fdwan@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.

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 - 12)**

    To approve the minute of the Committee's previous meeting held on the 9th March 2023.

4. **PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE**   **(Pages 13 - 20)**
    AND COUNCIL REFORM

    To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform, Councillor David Boothroyd

5. **PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING**   **(Pages 21 - 30)**
    AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

    To receive an update from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Geoff Barraclough.

6. **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS**   **(Pages 31 - 66)**

    To receive an update on the effectiveness of neighbourhood plans and assess possibilities for the future of them.

7. **REPORT-IT**   **(Pages 67 - 130)**

    To review the 'Report-It' function and evaluate options for its improvement.

8.   WORK PROGRAMME REPORT   **(Pages 131 - 142)**

To discuss and shape the Committee's work programme for
the municipal year 2023/24.

Stuart Love
Chief Executive
25th April 2023

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Thursday 9th March, 2023**, Rooms 18.01 & 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

Members Present: Councillors Concia Albert, Barbara Arzymanow, Paul Fisher (Chair), Sara Hassan, Patrick Lilley, Ralu Oteh-Osoka and Ian Rowley.

Also Present: Councillor Geoff Barraclough (Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development) and Councillor David Boothroyd (Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform). Officers: Stella Abani (Director of Economy and Skills), Gerald Almeroth (Executive Director of Finance Resources), Haylea Asadi (Director Regeneration and Economic Development), Jake Bacchus (Director of Finance), Francis Dwan (Policy and Scrutiny Advisor), Bernie Flaherty (Deputy Chief Executive), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director Growth, Planning and Housing), Stuart Love (Chief Executive) and Manisha Patel (Director of Governance Operations – Oxford Street). External: Mike Cooke (externally commissioned report author, Chief Executive of London Borough of Camden 2011-2019).

1 MEMBERSHIP

1.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Paul Swaddle sent his apologies for the meeting.

1.2 The Committee noted that Councillor Barbara Arzymanow stood in as substitute for Councillor Paul Swaddle.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Councillors Arzymanow, Fisher, Lilley and Rowley all declared that in respect of Items 6 and 8, they are Members of the Oxford Street Programme Advisory Board.

2.2 Councillor Fisher declared that in respect of Items 6 and 8 he lives within the area.

3   MINUTES

3.1   The Committee approved the minutes of its meeting held on 8th November 2022.

3.2   RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8th November 2022 be agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

4   PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND COUNCIL REFORM

4.1   The Committee received an update from Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform, on priorities for the portfolio and updates that have arisen since the last meeting. The Cabinet Member's address stated that since submission of the report, the Council's budget had been approved at Full Council. The Cabinet Member highlighted that it meant Westminster charged the lowest Council tax in the UK. In addition, the Cabinet Member referenced the Westminster Green Investments, the corporate property portfolio, the Responsible Procurement Strategy launch and the Council accounts audit. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

• Free School Meals (FSM): Members asked for the scope of the rollout, the number of children set to benefit and whether non-Westminster residents would benefit from the scheme. Members asked for information on the practicalities in terms of contractors worked with and the overall cost to the Council.

• Council tax gap: Members requested a greater explanation in understanding why the gap exists and what efforts are being made to close it. This was noted as an action.

• Business rate collections: Members asked whether there was a shortfall on business rates, like Council Tax. Members also asked what the level was and what the likely contributing factors were.

• Report-It online tool: The report identified that just 29% of users gave feedback that they were satisfied with the service and Members asked how this was being addressed and what the budget for improvements would be. More detail was asked for on changes to the experience and whether the budget set for the changes was sufficient.

• Electoral services: Given the impending legislative changes requiring formal identification to vote, Members asked what work was being done to make people aware of this and to minimise the disruption this could cause. It was also asked whether work was being joined up with other local authorities.

• Ethical collections: Members asked for more detail on what this would mean.

- Seymour Leisure Centre: Members asked, given the required changes, whether the programme was still deemed necessary and what the justification was to carry it on.

4.2 Actions

1) The Cabinet Member, through the Revenues and Benefits team, was asked to provide a greater in-depth explanation as to contributing factors that explain the Council Tax collection gap. Members also requested more detail on how this shortfall is being addressed.

5 PORTFOLIO UPDATE - CABINET MEMBER FOR PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, on priorities for the portfolio and updates that have arisen since the last meeting. The Cabinet Member's address brought particular attention to the North Paddington Partnership Group, Maida Vale Community Group, High Street Programme and widening the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) application criteria given the £12 million that is still available. The Cabinet Member then responded to questions on the following topics:

- Promotion of economic schemes: Members suggested that pop-ups, enterprise spaces and other employment schemes could be promoted better, to improve their reach and achieve more impactful outcomes. This was marked as an action for noting.

- North Paddington Programme: Members asked for more detail on the Programme and a timeframe for completion.

- Pop-ups: Members asked what the projections were for the outcome of pop-ups, factoring in vacated properties on high streets. Members also asked whether the scheme would likely have a long-term benefit to high streets and particularly small businesses. Both questions were marked as actions.

- Business rate revaluation: The Cabinet Member was asked whether there would be a re-evaluation of business rates in places like Oxford Street, given recent pressures and changes in the macroeconomic climate.

- Engagement in multi-ethnic areas of the City: Members asked whether engagement and consultation in diverse areas like Harrow Road and North Paddington would consider the breadth of different cultural sensitivities.

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5.2   Actions

        1) The Cabinet Member to consider the promotion efforts for employment schemes such as pop-ups and enterprise to improve their reach and achieve the positive outcomes they are capable of delivering.

        2) The Cabinet Member was asked for a written response to the question, 'given the level of vacated properties, particularly on high streets, what are the projections for what can be achieved by pop-ups, are they likely to lead to long-term improvements to high streets and (small) businesses?'

6   **OXFORD STREET DISTRICT PROGRAMME - MIKE COOKE REPORT**

6.1   The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Geoff Barraclough, introduced the report, highlighting the economic significance of the area in relation to national income and business rates but drawing attention to the need for refurbishment. After referencing the spend to date from the previous administration, he introduced the external report author, Mike Cooke. Mike emphasised the importance of self-improvement in local government, of which this was an exercise, and the importance of learning lessons from the past. Mike identified that there was strong awareness and clear determination to address known issues which he believed meant strong prospects for the Programme. Following this, Mike, alongside Stuart Love, Chief Executive, took questions from Members on the following themes:

        • Culture at Westminster City Council: The report identified officers seemingly feeling uncomfortable asking challenging questions, particularly of those in positions of authority. Members asked whether this was a culture identified in this particular team or whether it was more emblematic of the wider culture at Westminster City Council.

        • Technocratic competence: Members asked how oversight of operational detail could have occurred and why it might not have been picked up sooner.

        • Hiring processes: Members asked about the hiring process of key figures, specifically the Director of the Programme, how decisions had been made and whether changes had been implemented.

        • Managing escalating costs: Members asked whether there were plans in place for future projects that may, inevitably, exceed the budget and how they would be managed to not spiral to levels previously seen.

        • Timing of procurement exercises: The report identified that the timing of some aspects of procurement was "surprising". Members asked for more detail on how this finding was concluded and for an explanation as to why this might have been. Members asked how big of a problem this appears to have been and for clarity on what might have been done specifically in terms of procurement planning.

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- Identifying the Responsible Person(s): Members identified that from the report, it was not clear who, ultimately, was at fault. Consequently, Members asked who, specifically, was to blame for any errors in the past and which individual must ultimately take responsibility. Members also asked, if that could not be identified, how could the Council expect to learn from the past if it could not identify precisely where the mistakes had happened.

- Member/officer relationship: Members asked whether there was evidence of a breakdown in the relationship between Members and officers across the Programme as had been identified previously with the Marble Arch Mound.

- Pressurised environment: Members asked whether the Programme had a culture of putting excess pressure on decision makers. This was later followed up on for clarity.

- Meeting and decision-making accountability: Members asked whether meetings were held and recorded routinely enough and whether decision-making accountability was appropriate. Members asked for additional detail on the 'leaders of the oxford group'.

- Understanding the motivators for officers: Members asked if the drivers behind senior officer decision-making were known. Members also asked whether there are any changes now that are made more difficult as a result of the legacy of the Programme.

- Information sharing: Members asked what lessons were learnt on quality of information sharing.

- Spending to date: Members asked what certainty there was in terms of the figures published in the report and whether the actual figures were likely to differ dramatically. Further to this, Members referenced that the historic spending should perhaps not dictate future direction, in the form of a 'sunk cost fallacy' and whether the report author shared this feeling.

6.2   The Chair thanked the report author and invited the Chief Executive for comment. The Chief Executive, Stuart Love, wished to make it clear that he and the Council had accepted all the findings and recommendations of the report.

7   ONGOING EFFECTS OF COVID-19 ON COUNCIL FINANCES

7.1   The Executive Director for Finance Resources, Gerald Almeroth, introduced the paper, drawing attention to the fact that elements of the report had previously been analysed through the Council's Audit and Performance Committee. Having summarised historic impacts, the Executive Director highlighted that the current impact on income streams is estimated to be between £15 million and £20 million. However, there are several other external factors which make it impossible to identify direct causation. Committee Members then asked questions around the following themes:

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- Disentangling variable factors: Echoing what the Executive Director had stated, Members questioned the benefit of drawing conclusions on direct impacts given that factors are too entangled to determine direct measurable outcomes.

- Planning and parking income: Questioning the explanation of these decreases, particularly in parking, given long-term trends and other local authorities experience.

- Black-Swan events: Members asked whether there was adequate level of reserves for future 'black swan' events in the future, if central Government support was not as comprehensive as it had been for Covid, for example.

- Cost of major works and building: Given raw material cost rises, what the impact might be to the contractors and the Council to major works in the future. Members asked whether the Council was protected from the contracts agreed to significant rises in cost of contractors and the extent to which contractors could demand more money from the Council.

- Totalling the losses the Council is facing: Members asked for the total losses the Council is facing culminating in losses to income such as commercial property, parking revenue and parking suspensions. Members asked if there was optimism as to whether it would bounce back to previous levels.

8 OXFORD STREET PROGRAMME

8.1 The Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development, Councillor Geoff Barraclough, introduced the report. After referencing historic efforts to address the street and area, he described that it was time for a fresh approach with a view to improve the area and resilience. He clarified that the area covered by the Programme had changed and referenced some of the governance and stakeholder engagement in place before identifying the challenges of private sector contributions, inflation costs and risk of digging, given London Underground proximity. The Deputy Chief Executive, Bernie Flaherty, introduced herself as the Senior Responsible Officer alongside Manisha Patel, Director of Operations and Governance. Bernie highlighted the four main areas of the report: status of Oxford Street, the governance in place, engagement and scope. The Cabinet Member and Deputy Chief Executive then took questions on the following themes:

- Consultation: Members questioned the benefit of consultation feedback from 200 people, as referenced in the report, when millions come through the area regularly. Members asked whether engagement was sufficient and whether the Council had the expertise to operate effective consultation. Adding to this, Members stressed the importance of appreciating that engagement does not equal consultation and asked how important the principle of resident feedback was to the Programme.

- Pedestrianisation: Members identified that the threat of pedestrianisation was one of the most controversial proposals that have been considered to date and asked whether there had been any comments in favour of it, in consultations to date.

- Third-party funding contribution: Members asked what commitments from third-party funding would there be and how they would be managed by the Council. Members asked whether shops would be financially contributing to the Programme. It was suggested that the Oxford Street Programme should return to the Committee once the business case had been seen. This was noted as an action.

- Candy stores: Members asked how the crackdown on Candy Stores linked into the Oxford Street Programme.

- Quantifying success of the Programme: Members asked how the success of the Programme was going to be quantified and expenditure justified in terms of key performance indicators. Members asked whether mechanisms were in place to perform emergency stops on expenditure and outgoings.

- Responsibility of the Programme: Members asked who would ultimately manage execution of the Programme and whether they had the technocratic skills to do so. Members asked who the advisory board report to.

- Managing high-street change: Members asked whether the Programme was prepared for potential usage changes and what that might mean for the future of development and Oxford Street's ability to attract investment in the future.

- Adaptability of the Programme: Members asked whether the Programme had the capacity and preparedness for the potential overrunning of the projects and projects running overbudget. Members asked how the Programme fit in with Growth, Planning and Housing.

- Resident groups: Members asked that the Programme recognise the salient difference between residents and resident groups and to take caution with oversaturating opinions from resident groups on the advisory board. Members reminded the officers responsible to consider other forms of engagement to ensure residents were accurately considered.

- Highway improvements: Members asked for specific detail on some of the streets around Oxford Street including Berners Street, Newman Street, North Road and Park Street. Members asked what backlash, from residents, might be expected to any traffic management changes that may be incorporated and may displace traffic.

- Advisory board: Members asked whether the advisory board was overly ambitious given the size of the advisory board and number of different stakeholders which, even geographically, span the entire length of Oxford Street. Members asked what assurances there were that the advisory board is not dominated by some partied over others.

- Balancing businesses and public realm: Members asked how the business case goals would be balanced alongside flourishing of the local public realm.

8.2   Actions

1) To bring back the Oxford Street Programme when a clearer picture of funding is available, the business case has been completed and these aspects can both be brought to the Committee.

There was no other business and the meeting ended at 21.31.

CHAIR: _____   **DATE** _____

City of Westminster

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	04 May 2023
Portfolio:	Finance and Council Reform
The Report of:	Councillor David Boothroyd
Report Author and Contact Details:	Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor, mburton@westminster.gov.uk

1. **The following key decisions were made in the period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 09 March 2023:**

   - 14 March 2023: Balmoral Castle and Darwin House - Approval of the Full Business Case and the Appointment of the Main Contractor to Deliver Phases 2,3 and 4 (joint decision with the Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters)
   - 27 March 2023: Seymour Leisure Centre: Formal Planning Application and Outline Business Case

2. **The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date:**

2.1 Finance and Budget

Following pre-budget scrutiny by the Budget Scrutiny Task Group, the 2023/24 Budget was presented to Cabinet on 13 February and agreed by Council on 08 March.

Westminster Green Investment

In partnership with *Abundance,* the first round of the Westminster Green Investment 2028 (also known as the Green Bond) launched on 13 March and funded the full £1 million pound target in just 10 days, officially closing on 23 March. 484 investors participated in this round of funding aimed to support a variety of green initiatives within Westminster. The money will be used for various projects such as glazing upgrades, heat pump technology, installation of solar PV and draught proofing. Further details on specific projects to be funded will be released in due course.

<u>Population estimates</u>

In advance of any Government decisions about the local government settlement for 2024/25, council officers continue to work on finding reliable evidence to prove an accurate level of population. We are working with other inner London councils to understand where they are and to ask the Government to confirm its intentions about population modelling.

2.2 Cost of Living

<u>Support for Residents</u>

The council has / is coordinating a £14m package of support which includes national support and £4m from the council's own resources, of which £2m is from a dedicated cost of living fund.

Council funded projects include:
- Winter in the City (£200k). Ending in March 2023, warm and safe spaces across the city were promoted over the winter in order to help residents keep warm and save on bills. Thirty participating organisations were grant funded to provide activities and hot meals alongside health promotion messages.
- Increased investment in advice and outreach services (£522k), including to those working with Global Majority communities.
- Topping up existing welfare budgets, by adding £200k to the Local Support Payment budget and £200k to the Council Tax Hardship Fund budget.
- Supporting new food charities to help them establish (£40k).
- Providing food and holiday support (£230k) to low-income families.
- Adverts at bus stops promoting the Support Hub.
- Connectivity support including SIM cards, Community Fibre Free Fixed broadband connections and refurbished devices.

National support delivered by the council and partners includes:
- The Household Support Fund: October 2022 – March 2023. £1.9m has been distributed to low-income households through: Vouchers to households eligible for free school meals during the holidays; vouchers to residents in receipt of Housing Benefit but that didn't qualify for the £650 Government Cost of Living payment; a local hardship fund; and support to food charities.

A further Household Support Fund of £3.9m is available for April 2023 – March 2024 and details of how it will be allocated will be set out in a separate Cabinet Member Report. In line with Guidance it will include an application based element.

All of the Cost of Living interventions and analysis continue to be overseen by a Cost of Living Board. Recent analysis on those most impacted found the 31,000

households identified in the Strategy were still at risk, but further groups were also of concern:

- Low income households not in receipt of any benefits
- Private tenants
- Large families
- Disabled households / carers

The programme is underpinned by strong community engagement to understand the pressures faced by residents on the ground and officers meet regularly with the Food and Energy Network and a Community Alliance has also been established.

Support for Businesses

The support for businesses during the pandemic through the various Business Support Grant schemes and pandemic related NNDR reliefs has now concluded, although an adjusted Retail relief scheme remains for 2023/24. Businesses that continue to experience financial difficulty can apply for NNDR Hardship relief (applications are considered by the Rating Advisory Panel).

2.3   Revenues Collection

Revenues collection in 2022/23 has been good.

NNDR "In year" collection rose from 91.8% in 2021/22 to 95.5% in 2022/23. This is a very good outcome given the insolvency of a large number of companies following the pandemic. The service is well placed to improve collection further in 2023/24, although it may take a couple of years to get back to one of the Council's best ever collection percentage of 97.6% achieved just before the pandemic.

Council Tax collection also achieved a good result increasing "in year" collection from 91.5% in 2021/22 to 93.6% in 2022/23, although this remains below the pre-pandemic collection level of 96.7%. The achieved collection level was especially pleasing given that significant resources were diverted to administer the government's £150 Energy Scheme during 2022/23. The government's scheme also meant that Council Tax recovery had to be halted for a large part of the year. It is expected that the service will deliver further improvements in collection in the future, providing there are no more government schemes to administer in 2023/24.

Both revenues met their business plan in-year collection targets.

Ethical Recovery Process

The new Ethical Recovery Process is made up of four standards:

a) Pro-active promotion of the Council's 100% Council Tax Support scheme for residents struggling to pay their Council Tax
b) Long-term payment arrangements being agreed, i.e. no longer insisting that Council Tax debts are paid in full by 31 March.
c) Increased use of Council Tax Hardship (Section 13A) allowances for residents with exceptional circumstances or a current inability to pay. £200,000 was allocated to Council Tax Hardship funding as part of the Council's initial £1m Cost of Living funding, the majority of which has been utilised in 2022/23
d) Ensuring that the removal of goods by the Council's enforcement agents can only take place for Council Tax debts where the debtor has the ability to pay but is refusing to do so. Authorisation for all Council Tax removals by the Council's enforcement agents must be approved by the Director of Finance and Resources or the Director of Revenues and Benefits. To date the Council's enforcement agents have made no such requests for Council Tax debts.

Council Tax collection since the pandemic

There are three primary reasons for the reduction in recovery rates of Council Tax compared to before the Covid-19 pandemic:
a) Economic fallout from the pandemic and cost of living crisis.
b) Reduction in collection resources, as resources had to be re-directed to Cost of Living programmes such as the administration of the government's £150 Energy Scheme.
c) Reduction in recovery action. The administration of the government's Energy Scheme meant that recovery had to be suspended for a significant part of the year.

It is not considered that the Council's new "Ethical Recovery" process above has had any significant effect on the 2022/23 collection level. However, it was only introduced part way through 2022/23, and the 2023/24 financial year will enable a proper analysis of the effect on Council Tax collection.

2.4   Procurement and Commercial Services

PDHU Procurement

The Strategic Outline case agreed in January 2023 allocated a budget to develop the Stage 2 design of the project and produce a comprehensive Outline Business Case (OBC) by January 2024. To undertake this detailed appraisal of the shortlisted options & identify a preferred outcome for PDHU, the Council needs to procure specialist technical, commercial, financial and project management expertise for low/zero carbon, decentralised energy generation and networks.

A preferred Procurement strategy for the specialist expertise is expected to be approved in April 2023. Following a compliant tender process, contracts are expected to be awarded in August 2023 to develop the (OBC) by January 2024.

Responsible Procurement & Commissioning Strategy Launch

The Council's Responsible Procurement & Commissioning (RPC) Strategy was endorsed by Cabinet on 12 December 2022, and will be pivotal in helping the council achieve a Fairer Westminster. On 18 April, the Procurement and Commercial Service launched the strategy to our suppliers in an event at Grand Junction, with attendees from 50 of the council's key suppliers, as well as council officers and elected members.

Attendees were taken through what the RPC Strategy implies for new and existing council contractors, and what benefits it can bring to the businesses we work with, their workforce and our communities. The launch will showcase examples of social value and environmental best practice from a range of our suppliers, and even more importantly you will hear from our residents and supply chain workers about what responsible procurement means to them. During the event, existing council contractors were invited to voluntarily sign up 'live' to our new Supplier Charter and Ethical Procurement Policy. Following the launch of the RPC Strategy, the procurement team will be putting on a series of training workshops for different types of contracts, covering themes including modern slavery, carbon reduction, employment & skills, social value and much more.

I also had a recent opportunity to meet Masoom Islam, who is a young engineering apprentice working with our contractor CBRE on the project to refurbish Westminster Coroner's Court.

Church Street Site A Procurement

Following a positive outcome to the resident ballot in December 2023, the Church Street regeneration programme achieved a major milestone on 28 March, with planning committee granting its application to build circa 1,200 new homes for the Church Street community. Further to this phase 1 demolition contracts may commence.

The procurement for a joint venture partner went live in February 2023 and is currently underway, with a decision expected in July 2024.

Insourcing

The Insourcing Framework developed after input from officers, Cllr Ormsby and the Leader has been adopted. It is overseen by Insourcing Programme Board, a director level officer group. Four boards have now been held overseeing 15 priority projects agreed by ELT. Each board meeting reviews initial checklists giving the corporate board recommendation. Services have found this collaboration and independent review helpful.

2.5   Corporate Property

The Phase 3b PSDS funding and Phase 2 Programme

The Council's application to the Phase 3b Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) for £3.8m of grant funding to assist with low carbon heating projects was confirmed as successful by Salix Finance and the grant offer letter was authorised on 24 February 2023.

Steady progress is being made on our Phase 2 workstreams. The programme board has approved investment grade proposals for the following conservation measures which are in addition to the PSDS proposals (pipework insulation, BEMS optimisation/upgrade, EC Fan installation, cooling improvements, draught proofing, solar PV installation and LED lighting upgrades). Contractors are on site carrying out works across several interventions, for LED lighting; installations at 10 of 13 sites have been completed. Planning applications for solar PV installation consents have been submitted.

Seymour Centre

The planning and listed building application has been submitted for the Seymour Centre refurbishment. This is a huge milestone as the project has been under discussion for many years. Over the next period, officers will be continuing discussions about how the new Centre will be managed. The move from a single service to a multi-service offer requires different management arrangements. The core purpose will be the optimisation of benefit to the community by ensuring that the management of the Centre maximises service synergies and optimises the benefit of the flexible, bookable community spaces.

2.6   Digital and Innovation

Contact Centre

The in-house contact centre service continues to meet targets, with all targets met. The number of post-call surveys has increased, and all performance measures are meeting expectations, and improving month-on-month. Recruitment continues, with new Customer Service Advisors, as well as a Resource Planner and Performance Manager now in post.

The out of hours contract continues to be operated by Agilisys. Performance has recovered from the reduction in December, and targets are now being met, or within a percentage point of being met. Post call surveys also show high levels of customer satisfaction.

<u>Capita Cyber Attack</u>

Members will be aware that the council's contractor for Revenue and Benefits is Capita and that they discovered a cyber attack on 31 March. Services to the City Council were restored quickly. Westminster officers have been liaising with both Capita and the Government but there is no evidence that any Westminster data was affected.

2.7   Council Reform

<u>Council Meetings</u>

At the 08 March Full Council meeting, constitutional changes were agreed to allow public participation, including petitions, at Full Council meetings. This will take effect from the June Council meeting and will be reviewed in a year's time.

<u>Audit issues</u>

A new independent member of the Audit and Performance Committee was appointed in February 2023.

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City of Westminster

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	04 May 2023
Portfolio:	Planning and Economic Development
The Report of:	Councillor Geoff Barraclough
Report Author and Contact Details:	Maria Burton, Portfolio Advisor, mburton@westminster.gov.uk

1. **The following key decisions have been made in the period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 09 March 2023:**
   - 15 March 2023 – Neighbourhood CIL Decisions: Winter 2023 Application Round

2. **The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress since my last report:**

Economy

2.1 Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

The second quarterly BID roundtable was held on 21 March, where a range of strategic issues were discussed, complimenting the more operational nature of the quarterly forums for BIDs and senior officers. Engagement from BIDs at these meetings continues to be positive.

In March 2023, the London Heritage Quarter BIDs (Northbank, Victoria Westminster and Whitehall BIDs) held successful renewal ballots for their members, with the following results:

- Northbank BID: the majority of the business ratepayers in the BID area who voted, voting in favour of the proposal, both by aggregate rateable value (98.3%) and numbers voting (94.5%)
- Victoria Westminster BID: the majority of the business ratepayers in the BID area who voted, voting in favour of the proposal, both by aggregate rateable value (99.8%) and numbers voting (97.9%)
- Whitehall BID: the majority of the business ratepayers in the BID area who voted, voting in favour of the proposal, both by aggregate rateable value (93%) and numbers voting (81.3%)

Two more ballots are scheduled to take place this year. West Fitzrovia is a new BID proposal that will border with the existing Fitzrovia Partnership BID in Camden, with the ballot taking place on 20 June. The second set of ballots is for a new BID proposal to include the St. James's area bordering the existing HOLBA BID. This will require both a property owner and occupier ballot and is planned for late September.

2.2 Fairer Economy Strategy

The Fairer Economy Plan 2023 – 2026 is being developed and builds on the key strategic outcomes from the Fairer Westminster Strategy and Delivery Plan and the draft recommendations from the Future of Westminster Commission. The plan will set out the key challenges being faced right now and how the council proposes to respond within the next three years – this includes current delivery as well as new activity to be explored and developed. The Plan will not articulate the council's long-term vision for the economy but is the start of a longer process to co-develop a strategic vision for a fairer economy with stakeholders.

There are three key sections:

1) Resilient Businesses and High streets;
2) Vibrant West End; and
3) Employment Opportunities for All.

There has been extensive internal engagement with four cross-departmental workshops and briefings with Cabinet Members, ward councillors and the Leader. There has been some external engagement as part of the plan development, but most of the engagement will take place one the plan has been published. The engagement will not be a formal consultation but an ongoing conversation and partnership approach to evolving and reviewing the plan and co-creating key activity.

The launch and publication the Fairer Economy Plan 2023 –2026 will be held week commencing 5 June 2023.

2.3 Cost of Living, Social Value & CSR

Recent activities led by the team have helped to secure £185,000 of financial donations in Q4 from businesses to community organisations such as the North Paddington Food Bank, Abbey Community Centre, The Marylebone Women's Project, Young Westminster Foundation, Centrepoint and homeless shelters.

Social Value Impact Report

The team have been working with colleagues across the council to introduce a quarterly reporting process and an annual impact report detailing how suppliers support residents, communities and VCS organisations across Westminster. The impact report covering will cover the 2022-23 financial year and be published in Q1 of 2023/24.

2.4 Westminster Investment Service

Following the success of the London Retail Mission held in October 2022, London & Partners have confirmed their next inbound mission for 24 – 26 April 2023. The Retail, Leisure and Hospitality mission will welcome senior representatives of international, high-growth businesses to the West End for a series of events, talks and tours as part of efforts to successfully land these businesses. Business attending the mission will range from those at

early stages considering Westminster as a location to grow their business, through to those at an advanced stage i.e. actively searching for suitable property.

2.5 Meanwhile Activations Programme

Officers have developed activation concepts and financial models for Phase 3 of the Meanwhile Activations Programme including a draft strategy produced with the New West End Company BID area and aligning to its brand pillars. South Space Studios Ltd has been appointed as space operators for Phase 3 of the programme to deliver up to nine activations over a period of 3 years. The Occupiers and Property Owners Guide is being developed to set out a delivery framework for the activations. Officers are also preparing a Commission Brief to provide details about the application process to brands that want to participate in the programme.

2.6 Careers, Enterprise and Skills

On 25 April, Economy officers will deliver an event in partnership with the University of Westminster, Inclusive Futures: Insights - an employability-focused programme providing up to 50 first and second year students from typically unrepresented backgrounds in Higher Education (such as Global Majority heritage, students with disabilities, care leavers) the chance to grow their network, build confidence and gain an invaluable insight into career opportunities in London. Participants are granted a bursary for taking part and during the programme, students attend insight sessions, skills workshops and have 1:1 meetings with a mentor. This is the second consecutive year that Westminster City Council is participating in this initiative for and will deliver workshops to enable participants to learn about careers in local government.

2.7 Employment

Westminster Employment Service

Recent activity includes the Construction Job Fair in January (Westbourne Park Baptist Church) and our Spring Job Fair for Council suppliers (Stowe Centre) attracting over 30 employers with live vacancies and over 250 attendees. On the day activities at the job fairs also include employer led sessions to help employability skills, including CV writing and interview technique. Outcomes for residents are tracked and reported in quarterly reporting for the Employment Service due at the end of April.

The Coaching strand of Westminster Employment Service has secured additional funding from the Homes for Ukrainians scheme to extend employability support to referrals beyond the initial funding period November 2022 to March 2023 into the next financial year.

Westminster Wheels

In January, Westminster Wheels became a stand-alone social enterprise, following considerable support from the Council over the past two years to secure premises in Church Street, provide interim project management and to make connections with donors of

unwanted, old or disused bikes. Over £100,000 in corporate sponsorship has been leveraged via support from WCC Economy.

To date, the project has provided 31 unemployed residents with bike mechanic training qualifications and six-month London Living Wage placements; refurbished and sold 677 bikes and donated 307 bikes to low-income families.

<u>Westminster Works</u>

Westminster Works, a programme to support the Hospitality and Leisure sectors attract and retain talent, has engaged with over 2650 candidates and 140 employers offering London Living Wage vacancies to date. Over 40 job starts were recorded in January and February. Currently, the service is promoting over 560 live vacancies. The priority for the partnership is to continue to filter and screen the pool of applicants to ensure they meet the current vacancy criteria and place them in appropriate roles.

2.8 Markets

<u>Berwick Street – Community Saturdays</u>

The Markets team launched Community Saturdays on Berwick Street to raise visibility and awareness of the market's trade on Saturdays and to bring together members of the local community who have businesses. The programme will run on the first Saturday of the month from April to July.

Data from the first Community Saturday on 01 April showed that 75% of participants had increased trade compared to a normal trading day, all reporting a 25-49% increase in customers. There was at least a 50% increase in sales for 11% of traders. Community feedback has been entirely positive.

Place-shaping

2.9 High Streets

<u>North Paddington Programme</u>

The North Paddington Programme was formally approved by Cabinet on 13 February 2023. This placed-based delivery programme will be piloted in the North-West of the borough (including the wards Harrow Road, Queen's Park and Westbourne), where there are some of the highest levels of deprivation in Westminster, with lower levels of income, health, and higher levels of unemployment, than elsewhere in the City.

Embedded in the Programme is a new framework for working, which promotes community engagement and collaboration between officers, politicians, communities and business leaders and local stakeholders informs decision-making. Under the Programme, projects such as the GGF Maida Hill Market redevelopment will be supported and co-ordinated by the North Paddington team, demonstrating a new way of working, and delivering community engagement, to improve outcomes for our communities.

Officers continue to develop the three Good Growth Fund (GGF) projects at Maida Hill Market, Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Open Space.

The consultation for the Maida Hill Market project closed on 23 April 2023 after six weeks of engagement on the current proposals. Feedback and levels of support of the scheme will now be reviewed, but initial findings show over 82% of the public support the project's proposed designs. If the project is approved, there is an aspiration to begin work on site following Notting Hill Carnival in September 2023.

Planning and preparation for public engagement events are underway for Queen's Park Canalside and Westbourne Green Open Space. The next public engagement events will commence in late April and early May 2023. Beyond the GGF projects, work is under way to develop other opportunities identified through previous Place Plan work and in emerging priorities identified by the North Paddington Partnership Board, which was established in March 2023 and brings together stakeholders from across the North Paddington community who represent a range of different sectors including the Police, Education, Health and Business.

The Council is now actively working with the North Paddington Partnership Board towards the vision of making North Paddington safer, healthier and wealthier through improving outcomes linked to education, employment, health and wellbeing, crime and safety, climate, community and housing a comprehensive programme of work is being developed and will be delivered by teams across the Council, as well as in collaboration with community partners.

We are now working with local communities and stakeholders to build a community strategy for the programme, with the aim of maximising connections and relations with the communities across these wards. Finally, the proposed year one delivery programme will be the subject of a subsequent Cabinet Member Report. The aim is to drive the momentum for change in year one by delivering immediate improvements, alongside the creation of truly transformative projects, which will be built on as the Programme continues to develop and be informed through the collaborative, community approach.

High Streets Programme

In 2022, the Council committed £10m of capital funding to support the resilience and vibrancy of Westminster's high streets outside of the West End, bringing the local communities' needs and aspirations upfront. The Place Shaping team, in collaboration with Economy and Highways teams, have been scoping the development of a multi-disciplinary programme that helps to deliver the Fairer Westminster Strategy, focused on addressing challenges that high streets are currently facing and maximising the opportunities they offer.

After an initial assessment across Westminster's high streets, a focus on a cluster of high streets around Paddington-Queensway has been agreed due to a series of challenges that are present across these high streets, including poor active travel, safety and anti-social behaviour, poor quality offer and environment, limited cultural and community offer, and surrounding deprivation. These areas include Edgware Road, Praed Street, Queensway / Westbourne Grove and other local town centres in Bayswater, Lancaster Gate and Hyde Park Wards. Besides, as having both a major, district and local town centres, interventions across this range of high street typologies could provide a benchmark for a further roll out in other locations across Westminster in the future.

The team is currently preparing for a public launch and engagement from June 2023, when we will reach out to local communities and stakeholders for their views. This first engagement phase is aiming to capture input that will allow us to scope and prioritise actions to be developed and delivered in the next three years.

2.10   West End and Central Activities Zone

Soho
The brief for the Soho Monitoring Study has now been finalised and WCC are in the early stages of procuring a prospective consultant team to deliver the monitoring work to provide baseline data on traffic / movement, noise and air quality. On boarding checks for those that have responded to an expression of interest are currently taking place. As it stands the deadline for the return of tender responses has been set for mid May 2023. The appointment of a consultant team and the commencement of monitoring works will follow shortly after. Data collected from this study will be made available publicly at key stages within the project.

Covent Garden
Covent Garden Public Realm Framework has been published and presents a vision and key design principles to protect and improve the public realm, bringing together shared ambitions from Westminster City Council and key stakeholders for the future of Covent Garden. The document does not commit the Council to provide the measures laid out in the document. Specific projects will be subject to individual detailed design processes as and when appropriate. It will be reviewed and updated every two years alongside our stakeholders and partners.

Following an 18-months consultation, Westminster City Council and the London Borough of Camden have decided that the Neighbourhood Traffic Management scheme in Covent Garden will become permanent. At the same time, key stakeholders in the area are starting to develop specific schemes for the area.

Oxford Street
The Stage 1 (feasibility) design for Oxford Street is nearing completion, covering public realm improvements from Marble Arch to Tottenham Court Road including select spaces off the street to provide opportunities for planting, seating, and respite. The design will be completed in Spring 2023 and provides the basis for public consultation during the Summer. Officers have drafted a detailed engagement plan which outlines the channels and types of communication to be progressed.

A business case has been written for the Oxford Street and Oxford Circus projects that investigates both the case for change and investment. The business case is currently undergoing internal review and will be presented to Cabinet on 19 June.

An engagement event was held on 27 February 2023 with the purpose of getting up to date views of the user experience from people who could find accessibility issues a reason not to go to Oxford Street. This was a fun and exciting event and the feedback from this engagement will contribute to outcome setting for the programme.

We held the second meeting of the Oxford Street Stakeholder Group incorporating residents, business groups, landowners and TfL. We also held a special presentation and walk-around with Fitzrovia residents to look at specific changes proposed to some traffic flows in that area.

Paddington Place Plan

The Paddington Place Plan is an evolving plan for the Paddington area which seeks to deliver on the Paddington Opportunity Area and North West Economic Development Area (NWEDA) policies.

Projects considered as priority for 2023-2026 are key to deliver on the objectives of creating safer, accessible, and more attractive routes and places within the area. Three key projects will be brought forward starting in Spring 2023: (1) the canalside route linking Warwick Avenue station & environs, Rembrandt Gardens and Stone Wharf to Paddington Station, (2) Bishop's Bridge & the Harrow Road Gyratory, and (3) Paddington Green Churchyard Gardens.

<u>Greening Westminster small grants programme</u>

The Greening Westminster small grants programme was launched in March. Formerly known as Open Spaces, Greener Places, the refreshed programme more closely aligns with Fairer Westminster and better supports applications from community groups. The programme's key aims remain to increase and improve the quantity, quality and impact of open spaces and green assets across the City, with £350k of capital funding to support pprojects in 2023/24. There have been a number of community workshops held to inform and support applicants and individual feedback sessions have been offered. Successful applicants will be informed in June and will have a year to complete their projects.

Town Planning and Planning Policy

2.11   City Plan Review

Officers have been working through and assessing all of the sites which were submitted as part of a call for sites and the Regulation 18 consultation, as well as other sites which could potentially benefit from an allocation.

That sifting exercise is drawing to a close and the next steps will be scoping what evidence is needed and starting to draft policies. A brief for a new Housing Needs Assessment has also been drawn up which will form the key evidence for the changes to the affordable housing policy in the City Plan.

Ongoing engagement with stakeholders will take place throughout this process to build consensus for the new policies and any site allocations before formal (Regulation 19) consultation on a final draft plan.

2.12   Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

Public Realm SPD

The Public Realm SPD will replace and consolidate the outdated 2011 'Westminster Way' SPD and other old Supplementary Planning Guidance to set out technical guidance on the council's approach to making, changing, and managing the public realm. It will help ensure consistency in the design, delivery and maintenance of such spaces.

A draft document is in production and officers are currently undertaking a period of targeted informal engagement with key external stakeholders to further inform this. It includes engagement with Neighbourhood Forums, Amenity Societies, Accessibility groups, Great Estates and the BIDs, to better understand their current experience and aspirations for the public realm in Westminster, or views on the existing guidance to be replaced. The inputs from this engagement will be used to inform the draft guidance within the Public Realm SPD.

Officers will then be preparing to carry out a statutory six week public consultation on the draft SPD which we anticipate to take place later this year.

Environment SPD

The Environment SPD is currently under review and will replace the adopted version from 2022. It provides detailed advice and guidance on the environment policies in Westminster's City Plan. The Environment SPD is being reviewed to ensure we continue to achieve emissions reductions and wider environmental sustainability through the City's built environment, whilst simultaneously achieving targets and ambitions set out in Fairer Westminster, the Climate Emergency Action Plan and Air Quality Action Plan.

The initial scope of changes and alterations has been finalised and cover several areas: biodiversity net gain requirement and improvements to green infrastructure, improved flood risk guidance, further guidance on energy and carbon assessments, more extensive retrofitting guidance and more in-depth guidance on connections to district heating networks within the borough.

The next stages are the continued internal discussion and the commissioning of evidence bases to support development of the new guidance, and mapping of stakeholders for future consultations, both internal and external, on any proposed changes. This will be done while beginning preliminary drafting of the reviewed Environment SPD.

2.13   Statement of Community Involvement

Since the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) was adopted in 2014, not only has the Council's planning policy framework evolved (such as the adoption of the new City Plan in 2021), but also new technologies have emerged, and we have learnt new ways of working with our communities. An update to the SCI helps ensure we can meet our statutory duties and improve the way we engage with our communities in a meaningful and proportionate way, in line with the commitments in the Fairer Westminster Strategy.

The public consultation on a draft document ran for six weeks, ending on 14 March, and a number of minor modifications were made to the SCI to address feedback received during the consultation period. A revised version of the SCI has been prepared and will be presented for Cabinet Member approval and adoption in late Spring.

2.14   World Heritage Site

The Westminster World Heritage Site Steering Group, chaired by Westminster City Council, met in March, with updates on projects affecting the site from key stakeholders including the Palace of Westminster (Parliamentary Estates), Restoration and Renewal Delivery Authority, Westminster Abbey and the Greater London Authority.

2.15   Design Review Panel

The Westminster Design Review Panel was established earlier this year to provide an expert, independent voice to promote exemplary, sustainable design standards and to negotiate design improvements to major planning applications. The Panel will be formed of

20-30 members who will be independent experts whose observations and recommendations will be presented to applicants as impartial advice.

A recruitment exercise for Panel Members ran from February to 13 March, resulting in 250 applications, and shortlisting is taking place in advance of interviews. Successful applicants will be fully trained. Due to the high levels of interest for Panel Members, the recruitment process has been extended and it is expected that the first Panel meetings will take place in Summer 2023.

Smart City

2.16   Connect Westminster

The Connect Westminster Business voucher scheme was launched in August 2017 with a funding pot of £2m. Businesses with a connection speed of less than 30Mbps are eligible for a grant of £2,000 to upgrade to a gigabit capable connection. Vouchers have made large areas of the borough commercially viable for broadband providers to invest, accelerating their rollout plans. Officers have secured £300k additional ERDF funding to connect an additional 100 businesses and are seeking an extension to deliver the scheme until the end of June 2023.

2.17   City Lions Social Engagement Pilot

Smart City, in collaboration with the City Lions team and the supplier Volume Ltd, have developed an interactive Augmented Reality filter launched on Instagram as part of a brand awareness campaign to enhance visibility of our City Lions programme, advertise the many opportunities available for young people, as well as signpost users to the City Lions sign-up page.

2.18   Smart City Operating System: Air Quality data platform

This platform collates disparate data sets from across the city, in one user-friendly, freely accessible place. It is one part of a wider platform hosting other types of environmental data, starting with air quality as a use case.

Defra awarded a £72,000 grant to the project to develop an app with a third party to plot clean air walking routes. Internal testing of reporting dashboards has concluded and necessary changes are underway to allow selected third-party users to review the dashboards and provide further feedback. Simultaneously, the team are developing an export file and API for third parties to directly access all AQ data we can share.

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Finance, Planning & Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

City of Westminster

Date:	4th May 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	An Analysis of Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster
Report of:	Executive Director of Innovation and Change
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development: Councillor Geoff Barraclough
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Localism Act 2011 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012
Report Author and Contact Details:	**Brandon Avery, Policy Officer (Planning) –** **bavery@westminster.gov.uk** **Sarah Little, Policy Officer (Planning) –** **slittle@westminster.gov.uk** **Oliver Gibson, Strategic Planning Officer –** **ogibson@westminster.gov.uk**

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Neighbourhood Planning was introduced in the Localism Act 2011; it is an important tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their local area develops. The council has a statutory duty to provide support to Neighbourhood Forums that are preparing Neighbourhood Plans.

1.2 We have proactively encouraged and supported Neighbourhood Planning since the introduction of the Localism Act and dedicated resource towards helping Forums. This report summarises how the Council supports designated Neighbourhood Forums in carrying out planning activities in producing and adopting Neighbourhood Plans.

1.3   There are 23 designated Neighbourhood Areas in the City and of these 15 have existing designated Neighbourhood Forums (more information can be found on our webpage 'Live Neighbourhood forum applications'). Queen's Park is designated as a Community Council and have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. So far, five other Neighbourhood Plans have been successfully adopted in the city, these are Knightsbridge, Mayfair, Soho, Fitzrovia West and Pimlico. The Council is supporting many other Forums that are coming forward and progressing with draft Neighbourhood Plans.

2.   Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

2.1   Members are asked to note the content of this report, which provides an analysis of Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster.

3.   Background

3.1   The Council has a statutory requirement to provide support for Neighbourhood Planning, which is known as the 'duty to support' which have been embraced by the Council. This includes two specific roles, firstly taking decisions at key stages in the Neighbourhood Planning process, and secondly to provide advice and assistance to the Neighbourhood Forums preparing Neighbourhood Plans. Council officers in the Policy & Projects team provide advice and assistance in several ways.

3.2   The Planning Policy has two dedicated Policy Officers working specifically on Neighbourhood Planning, with each officer assigned a designated Neighbourhood Area, with a further support officer being provided to each assignment from senior members of the team. These officers are tasked with engaging with and offering specialist advice to Forums, as well as guiding them through the process from inception to adoption. Officers regularly update the Neighbourhood Planning section of the Council's website[1] with information on existing Neighbourhood Areas and Forums (including contact details), live designation and plan consultations. An interactive Neighbourhood Planning map shows the designations[2]. We have produced a bespoke Neighbourhood Planning Guide (contained as part of the Background Documents to this report) which is available online to provide Forums with information on what a Neighbourhood Plan should contain, how to begin work on it, manage expectations on timings for production of a plan and where the council can provide support. Some baseline statistics about the Neighbourhood Areas is also provided.

3.3   Currently, Westminster has six 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans:

- Knightsbridge Neighbourhood Plan, adopted 11 December 2018.
- Mayfair Neighbourhood Plan, adopted 24 December 2019.
- Soho Neighbourhood Plan, adopted 8 October 2021.
- Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Plan, adopted 8 October 2021.

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[1] Neighbourhood Planning section on the Council's website
[2] Interactive Neighbourhood Planning Map

- [Queen's Park Neighbourhood Plan](), adopted 25 November 2021.
- [Pimlico Neighbourhood Plan](), adopted 7 December 2022.

3.4 Officers are currently engaging with Belgravia, Maida Hill, Notting Hill East and St James's Neighbourhood Forums who are working to progress their plans through key stages of the Neighbourhood Planning process.

3.5 Neighbourhood planning is closely related to the Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL). NCIL is apportioned across the 23 designated Neighbourhood Areas. Neighbourhoods with made Neighbourhood Plans receive higher percentage of CIL collected as NCIL; NCIL rises from 15% to 25% when a Neighbourhood Plan is 'made'. Neighbourhood Plans also help to inform prioritisation of NCIL spending, ensuring that NCIL funding allows the local community to support infrastructure projects that positively shape the area and help residents achieve their vision for their neighbourhood. In October 2022, the Council updated the CIL Spending Policy Statement to establish a more inclusive and flexible definition of infrastructure, introduce policies including on revenue spending, and prioritise projects to reflect the Fairer Westminster Strategy. Subsequent public engagement has worked to enhance awareness of NCIL so that it is spent and accessed by a wider variety of individuals and organisations.

Engagement with Neighbourhood Forums

3.6 Before submitting the Neighbourhood Plan to the Council for examination, officers ask Forums to share with them at least two drafts versions of their plan, for the Council to then provide written feedback and assess whether it meets the 'Basic Conditions'. The Basic Conditions are set out in Schedule 4B of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as outline requirements such as promoting sustainability and being in conformity with higher level strategic policy, be that local, regional or national level. It is particularly important for officers to see the final draft before it is published for formal consultation.

3.7 Officers cannot draft the policies on behalf of the Forums however, the role of officers is to provide guidance to Forums on how they can put the views of their local communities, their vision for the development of their area and strategies into a Neighbourhood Plan. Community consultation is a key part of the process in making sure views of the community are addressed and that Neighbourhood Plans are compatible with human rights law. Forums must ensure that they engage with all members of their local community and assess any impact against different characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equalities Duty.

3.8 When the final Neighbourhood Plan draft has been consulted on, officers will also provide a response with comments on its policies and conformity. Lead officers will also incorporate feedback from other Council departments such as Town Planning, Highways, Licensing, Events etc.

3.9 Neighbourhood Plans must go through an examination similar to the City Plan to be adopted – i.e. they are assessed by an independent examiner appointed

by the Council in agreement with the Forum. All Neighbourhood Plans must meet all of the 'basic conditions' to be found sound by the Examiner. The basic conditions are set out in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)[3]. They state that Neighbourhood Plans should have a regard to national policies, have regard to preserving listed buildings, have regard to protecting conservation areas, contribute to sustainable development, conform with the local plan (Westminster's City Plan in this case) and does not breach any EU obligations.

3.10 Once the Neighbourhood Plan is 'made' (adopted), the plans are used to determine planning applications within the area they cover. It is important for Forums to monitor and keep track of the progress of the objectives and policies included in the Neighbourhood Plan to ensure the aims of the plan are being achieved and policies are working effectively. Neighbourhood Plans can be monitored by either the Neighbourhood Forums or as part of our Authority Monitoring Report[4].

3.11 Town Planning will be responsible for implementing the plan when determining planning applications. To help facilitate this, the appropriate area-based planning team (i.e. Central, South or North) will have been involved early on as the plan develops. Officers in Policy and Projects will ensure that colleagues in Town Planning, and any other relevant team, are briefed on the contents of the plan at various stages of their production and their views incorporated into any feedback given to the Forum on their drafts.

3.12 Through regular contact and information sharing, we have developed very good working relationships with all of the active forums, and they appreciate the time and effort put in by the council to support plan-making activities. Officers in Policy and Projects also make sure that forums are linked in with other relevant teams across the Council to help develop policies or feed into council led projects in their Neighbourhood Area e.g. the Highways or Place Shaping teams.

Perception of Neighbourhood Planning

3.13 Academic literature on Neighbourhood Planning within Westminster specifically, or wider perceptions of Neighbourhood Planning more generally, is somewhat limited given the niche subject matter and short duration since its introduction in 2011. Two of the preeminent studies into this field were both undertaken by the University of Reading on behalf of the former Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the current Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in 2014 and 2020 respectively.

3.14 The 2014 study was titled '*User Experience of Neighbourhood Planning in England*'[5] and as the name suggests, examined the experiences of

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[3] PPG Paragraph: 065 Reference ID: 41-065-20140306
[4] Authority Monitoring Reports
[5] User Experience of Neighbourhood Planning in England

Neighbourhood Forums and Parish Councils in the preparation of their Neighbourhood Plans. The specific findings of this study were:

- The drivers and motivations for Neighbourhood Planning were to reinvigorate the local area, as well as to protect the desirable characteristics of the area.

- The overall experience of Neighbourhood Planning was stated as being positive by 90% of respondents.

- A majority of respondents considered the plan-making process as being 'burdensome', however, 59% thought it was proportionate to the task of developing a document (or suite of documents) which would eventually have statutory status.

- To make Neighbourhood Planning a more attractive prospect, 49% of respondents stated that a better explanation of each step involved in the process would be beneficial, while 39% of the responses stated that a faster process would make it more attractive.

- 82% of those responding had been able to access the skills and knowledge needed for Neighbourhood Planning, however, 68% of respondents had to rely on consultants for support.

- Perceptions of support by the Local Planning Authority to communities participating in Neighbourhood Planning were positive, with 82% of respondents stating that their authority had been 'very' or 'somewhat' supportive.

3.15 The study also identified key issues relating to the different stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process, which are summarised in the following table:

Stage	Comment
Area Designation	*"Delay from the local authority was seen as holding up the process for a minority of the sample. There was also a plea made to clarify guidance on how to implement area designation more smoothly."*
Evidence Gathering	*"For some, delays or problems with assembling evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan was seen as relating to a general lack of resources, time and volunteers. Several interviewees indicated that some evidence was not available. Toolkits and templates were cited as ideas to help with this stage."*
Plan-making	*"For some, delays or problems with assembling evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan was seen as relating to a general lack of resources, time and volunteers. Several interviewees indicated that some evidence was not available. Toolkits and templates were cited as ideas to help with this stage."*

Community Engagement, Consultation and Publicity	*"This went well for most groups but it was noted that little advice or guidance on community engagement was available. Further advice and guidance on this dimension of neighbourhood planning was recognised as being useful."*

3.16   The 2020 study was titled '*Impacts of Neighbourhood Planning in England*'[6] and involved a desktop study that analysed 865 completed Neighbourhood Plans, as well as a detailed review of nine case study areas across England involving 20 'made' Neighbourhood Plans. The study focused on the impacts on the planning system arising from Neighbourhood Planning being in place for its first decade. The key findings of this study were:

- *Development Impacts and Housing Supply* – Where Neighbourhood Plans allocate housing sites, there can be significant improvements in supply. Over the 135 Neighbourhood Plans reviewed, there were an additional 18,000 units above Local Plan allocations.

- *Design Impacts* – Neighbourhood plans have helped improve design policy and refined local priorities. The example cited was improving the design standards for housing for specific societal groups, although design impacts are widespread given the broad areas that policies can cover.

- *Decision-Making* – Neighbourhood Plans have gained an influential role in planning decisions, which reflects their statutory status. Over 50% of respondents from Local Planning Authorities across England see Neighbourhood Plans as having a 'moderate' or 'high' degree of influence on decision-making.

- *Community Attitudes and Engagement* – Neighbourhood Planning is widely seen as improving relations between the community and Local Planning Authority. There was also anecdotal reports from respondents about there being higher levels of acceptability of development where a Neighbourhood Plan is were place.

- *Influence of Geography* – In general there is a higher uptake of Neighbourhood Planning in southern England and in rural communities. Conversely, northern England and urban communities saw lower uptake.

- *Common Barriers* – Time and resource burden where the key barriers identified by respondents, with the average time taken to reach completion of Neighbourhood Plan being approximately three years. Other issues identified was the need to engage consultants and maintaining a positive working relationship with the Local Planning Authority.

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[6] Impacts of Neighbourhood Planning in England

Challenges

3.17   Whilst the introduction of Neighbourhood Planning has produced many benefits, some challenges persist, namely time and resource allocation and Forums' expectations of the Council. These are explored in more detail in the following sections.

Time Allocation and Resources

3.18   Although the Council fully supports Neighbourhood Planning in Westminster and it is important that officers provide fair and equal support to each forum and spend time fairly, officers have a limited amount of time available given other statutory responsibilities, such as carrying out the City Plan review or developing Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's). This is also compounded by the fact we have a high number of active forums compared with other Local Authorities which means a single officer can be responsible for a number of different Forums and a number of different Neighbourhood Plans. This issue is managed proactively with officers informing the Forums as early as possible if there are likely to be periods of time when officer availability will be impacted.

3.19   The time and resource demands for Neighbourhood Planning present another barrier to entry for Forums, meaning that maintaining representation from a broad cross-section of the community can be difficult as those who have the time and willingness to become involved with Neighbourhood Planning tend to come from the same demographic (i.e. retirees or those heavily involved in the local business community such as Business Improvement Districts).

Forums' Expectations of the Council

3.20   Neighbourhood Forums should be made aware that there are limits to what the council can offer. For example, we cannot draft the plan for them and they must be responsible for the policies in order to truly represent the local views. It is therefore not the Council's role to:

- Attend every meeting arranged by the Forum.

- Draft plan policies or lead on plan preparation.

- Produce specific evidence base or analysis to support the Neighbourhood Plans.

- Provide legal advice.

- Assist in collating and analysing consultation responses.

- Make comments at every stage of the plan making process or where multiple iterations of draft Neighbourhood Plans are produced.

- Promote the Neighbourhood Plan outside of the regulation requirements.

- Provide monetary assistance.

- Set up external webpages.

<u>Limits to Neighbourhood Planning</u>

3.21   It is also important for Forums to understand the limits to Neighbourhood Planning. Ultimately, the plans are technical documents for decision making and must only pertain to planning issues. A common issue that is encountered is Forums straying from planning matters and focusing on other local issues, such as trying to control construction impacts, licensing of events, influencing the quality of retail occupiers or changing bus routes, all of which have no mechanism within Neighbourhood Planning to regulate.

3.22   It can be difficult for Forums to engage a broad audience when developing their plan as it becomes technical and can be overwhelming for people without a planning background. It is therefore important for officers to support residents in developing their objectives and views into actual policies, and for these to be presented in a simple and logical manner.

Implementation

3.23   Once the Neighbourhood Plan has followed of the relevant statutory stages and been formally 'made' (adopted), the final stage is implementation and delivering the priorities identified in the plan. The following considerations will be used to ensure that 'made' neighbourhood plans create positive change locally, through:

- *Planning decisions* - The Council will determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory development plan for the area, which will include the Neighbourhood Plan when it is 'made'.

- *Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)* – Once Neighbourhood Plans are 'made', the amount of neighbourhood portion of CIL to spend on infrastructure to support growth in the area, rises to 25% of CIL receipts rather than the basic 15% when a Neighbourhood Plan is not in place. Neighbourhood Plans also inform how CIL is spent. The plans provide strategic direction on priorities for local NCIL and are taken into consideration when determining applications for NCIL funding.

- *Monitoring* - Keeping track of the objectives and policies included in Neighbourhood Plans can be monitored by the Forum to help assess whether the plan's aims are being achieved, and if not, whether anything different need to be done to achieve them.

Comparison with Neighbouring Local Authorities

3.24   It has been well documented in the media that just a quarter of designations approved for a Neighbourhood Area and Forum in order to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in London have resulted in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. Analysis from Planning Resource shows that just 27 plans have been adopted in London and remains the area in England with the lowest number of 'made' Neighbourhood Plans to date.

3.25 To better understand this within Westminster's context, we have taken a look at adjacent/nearby authorities to see how Westminster compares:

Local Authority	Number of Adopted Plans
Westminster	6
Camden	7
Kensington and Chelsea	2
Lambeth	1
City of London	0
Southwark	0
Hammersmith & Fulham	0
Islington	0
Wandsworth	0
Brent	2
Tower Hamlets	2
Hackney	0
Total (exc. Westminster)	14

3.26 From the table above, this shows that other than Camden, Westminster has one of the highest areas with 'made' (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans within this area of Central London.

3.27 The majority of 'made' Neighbourhood Plans seek to address strategic and long-term plans for their areas and to achieve policy outcomes to address particular development needs for their areas. In some cases, however, Neighbourhood Plans provide an opportunity to develop site specific policies focussed on achieving the best outcomes for the community on particular schemes in the area. Others also include a number of projects that are community aspirations and non-planning related, but which would seek to improve the area.

3.28 Although not within the London context, officers recently learnt about a 'made' Neighbourhood Plan for York called the York Minster Precinct Neighbourhood Plan[7] following a work exchange to visit peers in the City of York's dedicated Planning Policy Team. This Neighbourhood Plan demonstrated how some Neighbourhood Forums are proactively using the Neighbourhood Planning process to fund projects. In this case, the Neighbourhood Plan was 'made' to bring about the future care and development of the York Minster heritage estate. Multiple planning mechanisms were explored by the custodians of the Minster estate to achieve these conservation aims, but having an adopted Neighbourhood Plan was opted for as it presented the quickest path to approval and allowed for significant influence to be retained on the desired outcomes from key stakeholders of within the estate. The entire process was achieved in a 12 month timeframe, one third of the average for other Neighbourhood Plans across England, with significant collaboration between the custodians, Local

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[7] York Minster Precinct Neighbourhood Plan

Planning Authority and other key stakeholders in the area, including local residents and the business community, being crucial to achieving these aims.

Financial Implications

3.29   The costs associated with officers advising Neighbourhood Forums through the Neighbourhood Planning process, including preparation of the draft plan, public consultation and public examination are to be met from the existing Policy and Projects planning policy budget.

3.30   The portion of CIL collected that is apportioned to Neighbourhood CIL rises from 15% to 25% when a Neighbourhood Plan is made for that Neighbourhood Area. This reduces the amount of CIL apportioned to Strategic CIL, which is allocated through the capital programme to city-wide projects identified by the Council's infrastructure planning processes, but there is no overall impact on the total amount of CIL available to fund infrastructure.

Legal Implications

3.31   Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Local Authority has a statutory duty to assist communities in the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders and to take Neighbourhood Plans through a process of examination and referendum. The Localism Act 2011 (Part 6, Chapter 3) sets out the Local Planning Authority's responsibilities under Neighbourhood Planning.

3.32   The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) set out the legal requirements that must be complied with when preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure that these regulations have been met.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author: **Brandon Avery, Policy Officer (Planning) bavery@westminster.gov.uk** **Sarah Little, Policy Officer (Planning) slittle@westminster.gov.uk** **Oliver Gibson, Strategic Planning Officer ogibson@westminster.gov.uk**

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Westminster's Neighbourhood Planning Guide.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil.

A GUIDE TO

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING IN WESTMINSTER

City of Westminster

March 2022

CONTENTS

WHAT IS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING?

Neighbourhood planning was introduced in the Localism Act 2011; it is an important tool that gives communities statutory powers to shape how their local area develops. This guide explains how the neighbourhood planning system operates within the context of local, regional and national planning legislation. It outlines Westminster City Council's (WCC) role in supporting neighbourhood forums to prepare a neighbourhood plan and provides an overview of the entire process, from designation of a neighbourhood area to adoption of a plan.

What does this guide to neighbourhood planning do?

— Helps you to identify whether a neighbourhood plan is the right fit for your community

— Outlines the neighbourhood planning process step-by-step

— Explains how the council will support neighbourhood forums in developing their plans

— Explains the legislation and regulations that defines your neighbourhood plan

For more advice and information on this guide, please contact us at neighbourhoodplanning@westminster.gov.uk. The guide includes a range of links to websites providing supporting information, data or guidance. These links are up to date as of March 2022.

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

What is a neighbourhood plan?

A neighbourhood plan is a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of a designated neighbourhood area. It is prepared by a local Neighbourhood Forum (or, where in place, a Community Council) and it sets out planning policies for the area that are used to determine whether to approve planning applications. The below diagram provides an overview of the neighbourhood planning process, which is explained further in section 2 of this guide.

Designate a neighbourhood area and forum → Prepare the neighbourhood plan → Submit and adopt the neighbourhood plan → Deliver the neighbourhood plan
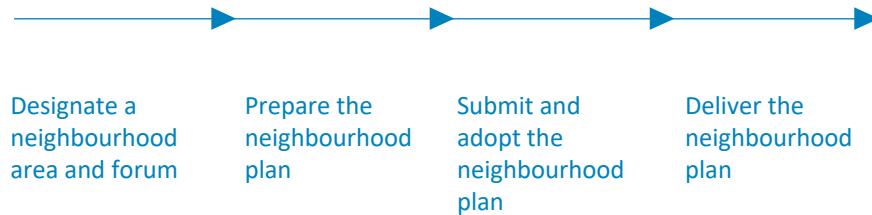
A neighbourhood plan can be used to:

– Develop a shared vision for your neighbourhood;

– Guide where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built;

– Identify and protect important local green spaces;

– Influence what new buildings look like; and

– Set out projects that have local support and which neighbourhood CIL could help[1] fund.

[1] See Section 3 for further information on CIL

Before embarking on the neighbourhood planning process, you must understand what a neighbourhood plan can and cannot do.

What a neighbourhood plan can do	What a neighbourhood plan cannot do
Guide where and what type of development should happen in the neighbourhood.	Conflict with the strategic policies in Westminster's City Plan and the Mayor's London Plan.
Promote more development than is set out in Westminster's City Plan.	Control development beyond planning matters e.g. street management.
Provide locally specific policies that complement and add value to existing policies in the City Plan and London Plan.	Be used to prevent development that is promoted in the local plan.

Neighbourhood plans are optional, but the council does support their use to help ensure development responds to issues important to local communities. There is no legal requirement for a community to prepare a plan; the policies in the City Plan will still apply to your neighbourhood. If you are considering whether a neighbourhood plan is right for your area, reflect on whether your community has concerns relating to development and whether it has the volunteer capacity to create a plan. It can take between two to three years to develop a neighbourhood plan. The benefits and costs of creating a neighbourhood plan, and not relying solely on the City Plan to guide development in your area, are outlined below.

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Benefits of a neighbourhood plan:

✓ Gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area.

✓ Has statutory weight: planning applications are judged against the London Plan, the City Plan and neighbourhood plan together.

✓ Neighbourhood areas with a made neighbourhood plan are allocated 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts, instead of the default 15% (explained more in stage 4). The plan-making process can include identifying shared spending priorities for CIL.

✓ The process can bring the community together.

✓ There is scope for plans to include policies on locally specific issues that it is not possible to address at a city-wide or London-wide level.

Costs of a neighbourhood plan:

− It can be time and resource intensive. For example, the need to meet the statutory 'basic conditions' adds time to the process, which is reliant on a significant amount volunteer time.

− Planning expertise and support is required, which can often come from costly external consultants.

Community consultation can identify non-planning goals which communities can tackle themselves through other means. If your community decides that there is no need to create a neighbourhood plan, there are alternative options to contribute to shaping development in your area:

− Apply for a Neighbourhood Development Order (a means for neighbourhood forums to grant planning permission to certain types of development within their area)

− Apply for a Community Right to Build (a form of Neighbourhood Development Order that is used to grant planning permission for small scale development to the benefit of the community in a specific area)

− Influence the council's planning policies by making representations at consultation stages.

− Engage with planning applications, either by entering into pre-application community engagement or attending Planning Applications Sub-Committee meetings and making verbal representations.

Council support

Whilst the council has a statutory requirement to provide support to neighbourhood forums preparing neighbourhood plans, it is a tool that Westminster embraces by putting local communities at the centre of the planning system. We will provide you with assistance and advice in your neighbourhood plan preparation and look forward to working with neighbourhood forums throughout the process.

However, we cannot draft your plan for you. Your plan belongs to your community; the council's role is to consider and approve your neighbourhood area, forum and plan, ensuring that they meet all the relevant regulations. We will also check that it generally conforms with the London Plan and strategic policies in the City Plan. Section 2 of this guide identifies the key stages at which the council will provide support and direction for the neighbourhood planning process.

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Overview of the neighbourhood planning process

The key stages to produce a neighbourhood plan are outlined in the next . Whilst the process is listed in defined steps and as a logical progression, the reality of neighbourhood planning is often more complex, with different steps running in parallel. The statutory requirements for neighbourhood plans must be properly addressed within the relevant timescales (marked with an *), but there is flexibility with several of the steps outlined in the table below.

Stage	Steps	Time required (statutory timescales*)	Responsibility of
Stage 1: Designating a neighbourhood area and forum[2]	Step 1: Applying for a neighbourhood area/forum	Take as much time as you need	Neighbourhood forum
	Step 2: Consulting on a neighbourhood area/forum	Six weeks*	Neighbourhood forum, facilitated and promoted by WCC
	Step 3: Designating a neighbourhood area/forum	Decision made within 13 weeks from receipt of the application*	Westminster City Council
Stage 2: Preparing the neighbourhood plan	Step 4: Community engagement	Take as much time as you need	Neighbourhood forum
	Step 5: Reviewing existing policy framework and preparing evidence	Take as much time as you need	Neighbourhood forum
	Step 6: Drafting the plan	Take as much time as you need	Neighbourhood forum
	Step 7: Consulting on the draft plan	Six weeks*	Neighbourhood forum, facilitated and promoted by WCC
Stage 3: Submitting and adopting the neighbourhood plan	Step 8: Submitting the neighbourhood plan	Take as much time as you need	Neighbourhood forum
	Step 9: Consulting on the submitted plan	Six weeks*	Westminster City Council
	Step 10: The examination	As long as the Examiner needs	WCC and an independent Examiner
	Step 11: The referendum	Voters notified 28 days before referendum date*	Westminster City Council
	Step 12: Making the plan	When Full Council meets to make the plan, which takes place every two months	Westminster City Council
Stage 4: Delivering the neighbourhood plan	Applying the neighbourhood plan policies in the determination of planning applications in that neighbourhood area	Until the plan needs to be refreshed (for example when policies in the City Plan have been updated)	Westminster City Council

[2] Forum designations expire after 5 years and need to re-apply following the same process to retain their designated status.

SECTION 2: KEY STAGES OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

Stage 1: Designating a neighbourhood area and forum

The process for designating a neighbourhood area and a neighbourhood forum are very similar. The steps in the first stage of the neighbourhood planning process are:

— Step 1: Applying for a neighbourhood area/forum
— Step 2: Consulting on a neighbourhood area/forum application
— Step 3: Designating a neighbourhood area/forum

How will we help?

✓ Provide you with maps and consider the boundary/composition of your neighbourhood area

✓ Consider your application against the legal requirements

✓ Publicise consultation updates and events for designation

Neighbourhood areas

Nearly all of Westminster is covered by a neighbourhood area designation. Up-to-date information on existing neighbourhood areas is provided on the council's neighbourhood planning webpage.

The neighbourhood area does not have to follow existing administrative boundaries e.g. ward boundaries. You may decide that one area is particularly cohesive and has its own identity, or that adjacent neighbourhoods would benefit from being designated as one neighbourhood area because the subsequent plan could tackle shared issues.

You should check whether there are other neighbourhood areas nearby. If you think that part of an area that is already designated as a neighbourhood area should be part of your area, you will need to talk to us about how to proceed. Whatever area you decide upon, you will need to say why you have chosen it when you make your application to the council. Both the council website and the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) website outline the process for designating a neighbourhood area. There are no time constraints in setting up an area: you can take as long as you need.

Neighbourhood forum designations are subject to the following tests, highlighted on the council's neighbourhood planning webpage:

— The neighbourhood forum has been established for the express purpose of promoting or improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of an area that consists of or includes the neighbourhood area concerned;

— There are at least 21 members who live in the area, work in the area or are an elected member for any part of the area; and

— The area is not governed by a parish council.

Step 1: Applying for a neighbourhood area

To apply for the designation of a neighbourhood area, the community needs to write a letter to the council that includes the following legal requirements:

— a map showing the area you want designated as a neighbourhood area (the council can help you to create this map);

— a statement explaining why this area is appropriate for designation; and

— a statement that the organisation or body is a parish council or capable of being designated as a neighbourhood forum, for the purposes of section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This process is outlined in Regulation 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.

Business neighbourhood areas

Where a proposed neighbourhood area is one that is wholly or predominantly business in nature, the council may decide to designate it as a business area. This has the effect of allowing businesses to vote in an additional referendum on whether to bring the neighbourhood plan into force. While such areas may choose to prepare a plan with a greater business focus, the additional referendum is the only procedural difference between a designated business area, and other neighbourhood planning areas. In all neighbourhood areas, it is important to engage with and involve the business community.

This process is outlined in section 61H of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Step 2: Consulting on a neighbourhood area application

The council is required to consult on applications for new neighbourhood areas. Once the council receives an application, we will publish the application on our neighbourhood planning webpage to give people who live, work or carry out business in the area an opportunity to comment. Residents and businesses can subscribe to the Planning Consultation List Enrolment.

We aim to set up and start the consultation within two weeks of receiving a complete application. An application will be subject to public consultation for at least six weeks, in alignment with Regulation 6 (2012). Consultation events will be published online on the council's consultation webpage, but we advise that you also promote the consultation locally.

Step 3: Designating a neighbourhood area

After consultation, the responses will be considered. A report detailing the main issues raised in responses will be prepared for the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning. In most circumstances, this report will have a recommendation for the area to be designated. In accordance with Regulation 6a of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations (2015), the council has a total of 13 weeks to determine the application from the date that the consultation started. If the area extends outside Westminster, we will have 21 weeks to determine the application.

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Neighbourhood forums

Once a neighbourhood area has been designated, members of the community can form a neighbourhood forum to take forward the development of a neighbourhood plan. The steps (1-3) to designate a neighbourhood area are similar to that of designating a neighbourhood forum. A neighbourhood forum application must contain:

— The name of the proposed neighbourhood forum;

— A copy of your written constitution;

— The name of the neighbourhood area and a map identifying it;

— Contact details for at least one member (which will be made public); and

— A statement explaining how the neighbourhood forum meets the requirements of section 61F(5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). This statement should explain how the forum was put together and include contact details of the people in the forum.

The factors affecting the council's decision to designate are:

— How widely the membership is drawn (including different places and different sections of the community); and

— How the purpose of the group generally reflects the character of the area.

If a neighbourhood forum is designated, no other organisation or body can be designated as a forum for that neighbourhood area until the existing designation expires or is withdrawn. A neighbourhood forum designation expires after five years from the date it is made. The re-designation process is identical to the initial designation process.

The council is also required to consult on applications for new neighbourhood forums. On receiving an application, the council will publicise it for a six week period to provide an opportunity for people in the local area to comment. We aim to set up and start the consultation within two weeks of receiving a complete application.

 Similar to consultations for neighbourhood areas, the council will publish consultation updates and events on our website, but we advise that you also promote the consultation locally. In accordance with Regulation 2 of the Neighbourhood Planning and Development Management Procedure (Amendments) Regulations 2016, the council has a total of 13 weeks to determine the application from the date that the consultation started. For applications that extend beyond Westminster and require an application to more than one council, we will have 21 weeks to determine the application. The decision on whether or not to designate the neighbourhood forum will be made by the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning.

Stage 2: Preparing the neighbourhood plan

Once an area and forum have been designated, there are four steps in this initial stage of drawing up a draft plan:

— Step 4: Community engagement

— Step 5: Reviewing existing policy framework and preparing evidence

— Step 6: Drafting the plan

— Step 7: Consulting on the draft plan

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Step 4: Community engagement

Community engagement should aim to involve everyone in the local area whom might be affected by the neighbourhood plan. This will mainly be residents, but it will also include anyone who travels into the area to work, visitors and local businesses. You should seek to include landowners or their agents if they are likely to be affected by proposals in the plan. A priority early in the plan-making process should be to list all the people and groups you can think of whom you will need to involve.

We can help you decide how best to involve the community in developing your neighbourhood plan. Before you begin writing your plan, it may be helpful to:

— Focus on informing people about what a neighbourhood plan is, that a neighbourhood plan is being prepared for their area, and how they can get involved;

— Ask the community open questions, enabling everyone to say what is important to them, rather than limiting views to specified issues; and

— Delve deeper into key issues/themes that have been highlighted as important to the community.

The engagement methods you choose to use are up to you. Be creative to engage people's interest and imagination. Methods could include:

— Polls or surveys (paper and/or online);

— Online discussion forums, social media comments;

— Market/street stalls/stalls at community events;

— Open workshops;

— A walk round your area, with people taking pictures of what they like or dislike; and

— Making a 3D model of your area, using approaches like Planning for Real.

It is important to balance the views of the community with robust local evidence. Secondary evidence can help inform community discussion, moving the debate beyond one based solely on opinion.

Step 5: Reviewing existing policy framework and preparing evidence

There are several sources of information on a range of topics that can support your plan, including:

— Plans and strategies: as explained in section 5 of this guide, neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the statutory development plan (the City Plan and London Plan). It is crucial that a neighbourhood plan does not repeat policies already included in the development plan; it is not necessary and can lead to confusion as to how the policies are applied if they are worded differently.

— Policy designations: policy designations for buildings (e.g. listed buildings), sites (e.g. scheduled ancient monuments), routes (e.g. public rights of way) and areas (e.g. Conservation Areas) highlight what is special in your area, and what should be protected or enhanced when planning for development. You need to take account of these kinds of designations when preparing your plan.

— Evidence: the policies you include in your plan must be based upon robust evidence as well as upon community priorities. There is a huge range of Westminster-based evidence sources available in different formats, including written reports, data presented as interactive mapping or charts, and raw data. Most of this is available on the council's neighbourhood planning webpage, but the council will also be able to provide more specific datasets upon request for you to analyse. Given the breadth of information available, think carefully about what is the most relevant evidence that will actively inform your plan. Try to minimise the collection of your own data: you may be able to use or build upon evidence gathered for the City Plan, or for other nearby neighbourhood plans. Once you have ideas about what types of policies you would like to include in your plan, we can provide guidance of where we think you may need new evidence to support them.

Step 6: Drafting the plan

Once you have gathered community views and evidence, there is a wide range of things to think about when drawing up the draft plan:

— Identify key issues/themes for the plan to address based on the engagement and consultation you have done and the evidence that you have collected. Some plans may only have one policy, do not feel obliged to write lots of policies that simply rephrase policies in the City Plan or London Plan, as these will already apply to planning applications in the neighbourhood area..

— Ensure any policy ideas do not conflict with national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), or strategic policies in the London Plan or the City Plan. Appendix 2 of the City Plan sets out which policies are strategic, whilst all of the London Plan is strategic.

— Develop clear aims for the neighbourhood plan that tackle the key issues/themes, whilst recognising that the policies with which to achieve these aims can only deal with planning matters.

— Write relevant planning policies: policies are best written in a concise, positive and unambiguous way, in order to give clear requirements for development to meet, to inform decision makers and those applying for planning permission. There is no need to use jargon or to write in a legalistic way; it is better if the policies are written in simple and plain English. Examples of positive language in a policy could be 'development will demonstrate how it will enhance or maintain the public realm' instead of the negatively phrased 'development will not harm the public realm'.

— Identify any special projects or proposals for the neighbourhood area: consider whether these projects need to be enabled by policies. If they do, we advise that you include any special projects as an appendix to the neighbourhood plan.

— Consider allocating specific sites for different uses: if there are different options for where the development can go, you should highlight in your plan what is the best option(s).

When drafting your neighbourhood plan, ensure that the priorities in it have a realistic chance of being delivered. To achieve this, you could create an action plan for how to achieve the aims you have identified in the plan. An action plan could also be an effective way to identify your priorities for spending Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts.
More information on CIL is available in Stage 3 of this section: 'Delivering the neighbourhood plan'.

Draft plan 'health-check'

As set out in section 5 of this guide, your plan will need to meet the basic conditions to pass examination. You should share your initial first draft with us for comment before you carry out any formal consultation on the plan. When the plan has been amended in response to consultation, you should also share another draft with us before it is formally submitted. The guidance we can provide on these drafts can help reduce issues that need further exploration through independent examination.'

Top tips for drafting your plan

— Engage early with the council to let us know you intend to start working on a Neighbourhood Plan and share draft versions of the plan with us for guidance before it is formally submitted for examination.

— Engage early with the local community to identify the key themes and issues you want to address through the Plan.

— Make the plan focussed on issues specific to your neighbourhood area that are not covered already by the City Plan, London Plan or NPPF – there is no need for a policy on every possible topic area if already adequately addressed elsewhere.

— Avoid repeating or simply rephrasing City Plan, London Plan or NPPF as you are not adding anything locally specific to it that will impact on how planning applications are determined.

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- Focus on planning policies that can be used to determine planning applications rather than seeking to impose additional procedural requirements on the council as planning authority e.g. additional consultation requirements.
- Ensure the plan does not stop development encouraged by the London Plan or City Plan.
- Focus on issues that can be controlled through land use planning – i.e. not matters such quality of retail occupiers, licensing hours, changes to bus routes etc.
- Set priorities for future spend of neighbourhood CIL in your area in a 'projects' on 'neighbourhood CIL priorities' section appendix to the plan.
- The plan should have a clear and organised structure, which avoids repetition and clearly sets out the plan's vision and objectives and how the policies contribute to achieving them. It should also clearly identify what is policy and what is supporting text, and ensure there is evidence justifying the policies – including any standards or development thresholds and their impact on development viability (these can be added as an appendix).
- Number paragraphs and policies, provide clear maps and ensure maps and pictures in the document clearly relate to and support the policies and supporting text. Areas and buildings that are referred to in policies should be clearly identified (e.g. through a map).
- Use plain English, avoid jargon and the use of acronyms. Add a glossary at the end of the document.

We can advise on:

- ✓ Making best use of the evidence, including if any additional evidence needed to support the policies in the plan;
- ✓ What makes a good policy;
- ✓ The role of supporting text to the policies;
- ✓ The requirement for a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA);
- ✓ The need to gather more evidence to support your plan;
- ✓ Addressing EU obligations;
- ✓ The use of monitoring indicators;
- ✓ Providing a health-check of your draft plan; and
- ✓ Advising you on whether changes may be needed to ensure it meets the basic conditions.

Regulations and guidance

NPPG: Preparing a neighbourhood plan
Locality: How to write planning policies for your neighbourhood plan
Locality: How to create a neighbourhood plan: Your step by step roadmap guide
The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012: Regulation 14 and Regulation 21
NPPG: Consulting on, and publicising, a neighbourhood plan
Neighbourhood Planning and the Historic environment

Step 7: Consulting on the draft plan

Pre-submission consultation

The neighbourhood forum is required to undertake consultation for a period of at least six weeks on the draft neighbourhood plan. You should try to publicise the consultation as widely as possible. Consider contacting:

- Local residents and businesses;
- Key consultees, based on the content of the plan (e.g. Natural England, the Environment Agency, Historic England);
- Neighbouring neighbourhood forums;
- Significant landowners, particularly if you are proposing to allocate their land for any reason; and
- Local community organisations.

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We can help you publicise the consultation via social media and other online tools and we can provide you with contact details for key consultees subject to GDPR restrictions[3]. You must record the contact details of those that respond to the consultation - an email address is usually sufficient - so that they can be informed of any changes made to the neighbourhood plan. You must also clearly set out how their contact details will (and will not) be used to comply with GDPR legislation. These details need to be sent to the council as part of the consultation statement when you submit the neighbourhood plan.

Responding to the consultation

Once you have identified the main issues raised in comments on the draft plan, you must decide whether you want to change the plan to try to address these issues. It may be necessary to prompt people to suggest how the draft plan could be changed to address the issue raised. However, you do not have to change the plan as they suggest. We will comment on the revised draft plan and determine whether the plan meets the basic conditions.

You will need to set out information about the consultation in the consultation statement. You may find it beneficial to look at how other neighbourhood forums have done this, or the consultation statements used to support the council's own planning policies.

Stage 3: Submitting and adopting the neighbourhood plan

This is the formal stage of the plan whereby most of the actions are taken by the council. There are five steps to this stage:

— Step 8: Submitting the neighbourhood plan

— Step 9: Consulting on the submitted plan

— Step 10: The examination

— Step 11: The referendum

— Step 12: Making the plan

How will we help?

✓ Inform you of the documents required for submission

✓ Publicise consultation updates and events for the final plan

✓ Suggest options for the appointment of the Examiner

✓ Send the submission documents to the appointed Examiner

✓ Arrange and facilitate the referendum

Step 8: Submitting the neighbourhood plan

The neighbourhood forum passes over the neighbourhood plan to the council at this step. When you are ready to submit your plan, you will need to send us a:

— Basic conditions statement: a statement setting out how the neighbourhood plan meets the basic conditions (see section 5).

— Consultation statement: a statement setting out whom and how you consulted on the neighbourhood plan, the main issues raised and how you have addressed them in the final version of the plan. This should include a list of all the people/organisations that made comments on the draft plan (but not their personal details).

— Consultees' contact details: the contact details (usually an email address) for all the people/organisations that made comments on the draft plan. This is important as we need this information when we consult on the submitted plan. This should not be part of the Consultation Statement as the contact details need to be kept private to comply with GDPR legislation.

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[3] The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on Friday 25 May 2018. If you are handling personal information as part of your neighbourhood plan consultations, you may want to read associated guidance that the Information Commissions Office (ICO) have prepared: https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/.

This will help you ensure the personal data you hold meets the GDPR 2018 and inform you of the data you can share with the council and the Examiner.

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— Copy of the neighbourhood plan: please send us an editable version of the final plan e.g. a Word file; if modifications are necessary following the examination, an editable version will enable the post-examination steps to be handled efficiently.

The submission documents also need to include a map of the neighbourhood area, which we can provide for you. It will take us up to four weeks to check whether the submission documents include everything that is required.

Step 9: Consulting on the submitted plan

We will publicise the submitted neighbourhood plan and consult on it for a period of six weeks. You can help us by publicising the consultation locally, but this step is ultimately our responsibility. As well as ensuring others have an opportunity to comment on the plan, we also have a role as a consultee. The council will therefore at this stage make formal comments on if it thinks the plan as drafted meets the basic conditions, which the Examiner will then consider.

Step 10: The examination

Choosing an Examiner

We will discuss the appointment of the Examiner with you. There are two main appointment options:

— Both the NPIERS (Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service) and IPE (Intelligent Plans and Examinations) can send the council details of three potential Examiners, based on any specialisms we specify. We will discuss with you whom we think is most appropriate.

— We can send you the contact details of an Examiner that we think would be appropriate - for example, someone who has examined another neighbourhood plan in Westminster.

The council will send the comments received during the submission consultation to the Examiner along with the submission documents. Whilst it is up to the council to decide on the final Examiner, we will make the decision jointly with you.

The examination

The examination will most likely be conducted by 'written representations', but could also include public hearings. The Examiner will decide if hearings are necessary based on the complexity of the issues raised and the impact of policies and on whether the plan will meet the basic conditions. The Examiner may request a Statement of Common Ground (SCG) between the forum and the council is produced, which informs them of agreements and disagreements between both parties. This statement may recommend modifications to sections of the plan to ensure it meets the basic conditions (see section 5).

Examiner's report

The Examiner writes a report that sets out whether:
— the plan meets the basic conditions as it stands;

— modifications will be necessary for the plan to meet the basic conditions; or

— modifications cannot be made to enable the plan to meet the basic conditions.

If the plan meets the basic conditions as it stands, or if modifications are needed, the recommendation is that the plan can proceed to a referendum. However, if the Examiner concludes that it is not possible to modify the plan to enable it to meet the conditions, the recommendation will be that the plan cannot proceed to a referendum.

The Examiner will take as long as they need to properly examine the plan. A draft copy of the report will be sent to the neighbourhood forum and the council in draft for 'fact checking', when basic information in the report - dates, sequences of events or names - can be corrected before publication.

It is not an opportunity to query or question the Examiner's conclusions. This version is not for publication and should be kept confidential to the council and the neighbourhood forum.

Once the final report is published, a Cabinet Member decision is needed to progress the plan to referendum. To facilitate this, the forum should provide the council with an updated version of the plan that incorporates the modifications made through examination. Factual updates and corrections can be addressed at this stage, but more substantial changes must be avoided.

Regulations and Guidance

Neighbourhood Planning Independent Examiner Referral Service
NPPG: The independent examination
Locality: Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap (page 35)

Step 11: The referendum

Progressing to referendum
The council has a procedure in place for when an Examiner's report is received. Although the Examiner's report is not binding, there are limited options to make changes at this stage. We can:

— **Act upon the Examiner's report and progress the neighbourhood plan to referendum:** this option should be taken when the Examiner either recommends that the plan meets the basic conditions as it stands or can meet them subject to their recommended modifications and if the forum agrees to the modifications.

— **Propose to take a substantially different decision from the Examiner's recommendation:** this option can only be taken because of new evidence or a different view taken by the council about an issue.
In this case the council must notify all those identified in the consultation statement and invite representations on the alternative decision. Following these representations, the examination may need to be reopened.

— Decide not to progress the neighbourhood plan because of the Examiner's report: this is only permissible where the Examiner has recommended that the plan does not proceed to referendum, because it fails to meet the basic conditions or legislative requirements and cannot be modified to do so.

Once adopted, a neighbourhood plan will become part of the statutory development plan, and so the decision as to whether the plan proceeds to referendum is an important one. A report will therefore be prepared for the Cabinet Member for Business, License and Planning to determine the course of action to be taken. The decision should be issued within 5 weeks of the receipt of the final version of the Examiner's report.

The referendum

The council will coordinate the necessary administration for setting up the referendum. We will work with you to decide on a suitable date, providing at least 28 working days' notice that the referendum is going to take place. We will publicise the details of the referendum on our neighbourhood planning webpage.

The Examiner may advise that the area for the referendum should be enlarged from the neighbourhood area. If this is the case, those residents living in the larger area outside the neighbourhood area would be eligible to vote in the referendum. It is our responsibility to publicise the details and arrangements for the referendum, whilst it is the responsibility of the neighbourhood forum to campaign for a 'Yes' vote.

Factors that will make a 'Yes' vote more likely include:

— Publicity at all stages, so that the voting population are aware of which organisations have contributed to the development of the plan.

— Robust community involvement and engagement from the beginning and throughout the plan-making process, involving and engaging with as many people as possible, including minority groups, land owners and their agents, and local businesses.

— Basing the content of the plan on robust evidence and on the outcomes of community engagement. You must explain how key decisions were made in

producing the plan and ensure that decision-making has been conducted in an open and transparent way.

— Clearly explaining the choices and compromises made in the plan, whilst addressing the diverse range of local needs and wants.

The referendum for neighbourhood business areas

If a neighbourhood plan has been drawn up for a neighbourhood business area, two referendums will be held: a resident and a business one. A 50% or more 'Yes' vote from at least one referendum must be returned for the plan to proceed to be made. If the plan only gathers majority support at one referendum, the council decides if the plan should be made, taking into account:

— How close the result is in each referendum (i.e. did one referendum have a much larger majority voting one way than the other); and

— The level of turnout in each referendum (i.e. percentage of eligible voters who voted in the relevant referendum).

Once the neighbourhood plan has been through examination and the Examiner's report has recommended the plan to proceed to referendum, the council will contact all non-domestic rate payers within the neighbourhood area (or beyond if directed by the Examiner's report to invite them to join the Neighbourhood Plan Business Referendum Register) and to nominate a single person to represent the business by casting the vote. This will be no less than 56 days before the referendum is due to be held.

The procedures for businesses to vote in the referendum are:

— Only businesses on the register will be eligible to vote in the referendum;

— A business must be registered on the business voting register on the day of the referendum; each business gets one vote by one named vote holder. The named vote holder will be named on the form businesses are required to fill out to join the business voting register;

— To be eligible to vote, the named vote holder must be 18 or over and either a British, Irish or EU citizen or a Commonwealth citizen who has leave to enter or remain in the UK or does not require such leave; and

— Rate payers have one vote each regardless of the number of properties they are liable to pay rates on.

Once the date for the referendum has been set, all businesses registered will be contacted with details of the date of the referendum and how to vote. The Regulations for Business Referendums are set out in Section 7 of The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) (Amendment) Regulations (2013).

Regulations and Guidance

NPPG: The neighbourhood planning referendum
Locality: Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap (page 37)

Step 12: Making the plan

The neighbourhood plan can be made (i.e. adopted) by the council if more than 50% of those voting support the plan. Following a successful referendum, the council will formally make the plan through a decision of the Cabinet Member for Business, Licensing and Planning. Once the neighbourhood plan is made it becomes part of the statutory development plan for Westminster. This means that it is a statutory consideration in guiding future development and in the determination of planning applications within the neighbourhood area.

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Stage 4: Delivering the neighbourhood plan

The making of the neighbourhood plan is not the end of the process; the final neighbourhood plan stage is about delivering the priorities identified in your plan. You will find below a number of considerations to ensure that your neighbourhood plan creates positive change locally.

✓ **Planning decisions:** the council will determine planning applications in accordance with the statutory development plan for the area – which will include your neighbourhood plan when it is made.

✓ **Allocations of land for development:** as you write your neighbourhood plan, you can start thinking about how you will ensure that the development you want to see happens. This could involve talking to landowners or the council about how the development could be delivered, or starting to consider how a project might be funded.

✓ **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):** you can tap into the neighbourhood portion of CIL to assist the delivery of infrastructure projects that support neighbourhood priorities. It is recommended that such projects be identified in an appendix to the neighbourhood plan. More details on CIL can be found in Section 3.

Guidance and Resources

NPPG: Community Infrastructure Levy (Spending the Levy)
Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Fund | Westminster City Council

Monitoring and reviewing your neighbourhood plan

Keeping track of the progress of the objectives and policies included in your plan (monitored either by you or in our annual Authority Monitoring Reports) will help you assess whether your plan's aims are being achieved, and if not, whether you need to do anything different to achieve them.

If circumstances in your area change, you may wish to refresh your neighbourhood plan. The NPPG contains advice about the procedures to follow when updating a neighbourhood plan.

Neighbourhood forums as a statutory planning consultee

According to planning legislation (outlined in the NPPG), designated neighbourhood forums can request to become a statutory consultee for planning applications for certain types of development, within the designated neighbourhood area, before a decision is made.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

What is CIL?

CIL is a levy that local authorities can choose to charge on new developments in their area. Money secured in this way can be spent on infrastructure that supports growth anywhere in Westminster and is not time-limited.

Westminster's CIL is split into the following portions, as required by law:

— Strategic portion (70-80%): to be spent on infrastructure to support the growth of the area.

— Neighbourhood portion (15-25%): to be spent on local priorities (infrastructure and anything else required to address the impacts of growth) in agreement with the local community.

— Administrative portion (5%): to be spent on administering the collection of CIL.

What about the 'neighbourhood portion' of Westminster's CIL?

The 'neighbourhood portion' is initially set at 15% of CIL receipts in each neighbourhood area, capped at £100 per council tax dwelling (calculated on an annual basis). This means that for example an area with 500 dwellings cannot receive more than £50,000 of CIL receipts per year. This will rise to 25% of receipts (uncapped) where a neighbourhood plan is in place.

This portion can be used to support the development of the area and can fund anything that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area. The council is required to spend this portion in agreement with local communities.

Ideas put forward by those that live and/or work in the area should be considered along with projects that have been identified by communities through the development of their neighbourhood plans. Ward member support will be a key criterion in taking neighbourhood CIL spending decisions.

How to bid for the 'neighbourhood portion' of CIL

The Cabinet CIL Committee usually meet four times per year to consider bids put forward for the 'neighbourhood portion' of CIL. In advance of each committee, the relevant neighbourhood forums and Ward Councillors will be contacted by council officers and informed of CIL monies available within their neighbourhood and the deadline for making applications. They will then be invited to submit bids for CIL funds on a simple standardised application form, which incorporates the criteria for CIL funding. At least two Ward Councillors will need to support a project for it to be successful.

Where there is no designated neighbourhood forum, other community groups will be contacted and invited to submit proposals. Primarily, this will be the various amenity societies, who will be required to consult with any relevant Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and Ward Councillors for the area.

Once received by the council, applications for neighbourhood CIL funding will be evaluated by the relevant service area to assess their feasibility. In order to be successful, bids will need to fall within the parameters set out in legislation and in the council's CIL Spending Policy Statement. If the project is feasible and the criteria are met, proposals will be put to the CIL Governance Group of senior officers before being presented to the Cabinet CIL Committee for decision. Each application will require a council sponsor from the relevant service area in order to ensure effective monitoring and the delivery of projects allocated funds.

Further details on the process to bid for and on the allocation of the 'neighbourhood portion' of CIL will be provided on the council's website.

SECTION 4: COUNCIL SUPPORT FOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The council has a statutory requirement to provide support for neighbourhood planning, which is known as the 'duty to support'. This includes two specific roles: taking decisions at key stages in the neighbourhood planning process; and providing advice and assistance to the neighbourhood forums preparing neighbourhood plans. Council officers can provide advice and assistance in several ways:

Advice	Assistance
Technical expertise (e.g. explaining how you can meet the legal requirements for neighbourhood plans; providing advice on policy writing)	Process guidance (e.g. explaining the timescales and processes for examination and referendum)
Critical friend (e.g. commenting on draft questionnaires, reviewing the draft plan)	Point to evidence (e.g. population and housing evidence sources and data) Point you towards further support and funding (e.g. connecting you with groups that are further ahead in the process)

Nonetheless, neighbourhood planning is led by the community; we cannot and should not write your plan for you. The support offer set out in this guide is therefore focused on providing specific support at key stages in the neighbourhood planning process, as detailed below.

Neighbourhood planning stage	Support from the council
Designating neighbourhood areas and forums	We will consider the boundary of your neighbourhood area and the composition of your neighbourhood forum before designation (the Cabinet Member for Place Shaping and Planning is ultimately responsible for the final designation decision). We will also publicise consultation updates and events for the designation of your neighbourhood area/forum on our website.
Community and stakeholder engagement	We can publicise consultation updates and events on our website. However, we are not responsible for informal consultation or community engagement.
Building the evidence base	We can steer you towards relevant evidence sources for your plan and provide you with local data sets (although we cannot analyse the data sets for you). We can also provide GIS shapefiles so you can produce maps for your plan (although we cannot produce them for you). [4]
General conformity with the strategic policies in the statutory development plan	Before you draft the plan, we can discuss the requirement for general conformity with the strategic policies in the statutory development plan. This is made up of the adopted City Plan and London Plan. We will check your draft and submitted plan to assess how it meets the requirement for general conformity and advise where there is inconsistency.
Plan preparation	We can advise on key parts of the plan preparation process, from what makes a good plan to how to gather evidence (see section 4 of this guide). We can review your first draft of your plan at this stage and provide written comments for you to consider.
Draft plan health-check	Once we have provided feedback on your first draft and you have re-drafted where necessary, we ask that you share the second draft of your plan with us to ensure that it meets the basic conditions (see section 5 of this guide) – particularly before you consult on it.
Submitting the plan	We can inform you of the documents required for submission, including the: basic conditions statement, consultation statement, consultees' contact details, and neighbourhood plan.
The examination	We can suggest options for the appointment of the Examiner and choose one in agreement with you. We will also draft the Statement of Common Ground (SGC) where requested by the Examiner and send the submission documents to the appointed Examiner.
The referendum	We will coordinate the necessary administration for setting up and facilitating the referendum. You will decide on a suitable date for the referendum to be held.

[4] A number of base layers may need to be ordered through Emapsite as the council cannot provide you with them. The council will however refund the cost.

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Your neighbourhood forum will be allocated a dedicated lead officer and a support officer from the council's Policy & Projects team throughout the process. An initial meeting will be arranged to discuss your neighbourhood plan aims, resources and timescales, and its relationship with the City Plan. The best neighbourhood plans that have an impact on local development are the result of constructive and ongoing conversations with the council. Keeping in touch with us at key points in the process will ensure that your neighbourhood plan:

- is based upon the most relevant evidence;
- is additional and complementary to City Plan policies; and
- has 'teeth', in terms of influencing planning decisions.

It is recommended that neighbourhood planning enquiries are sent to neighbourhoodplanning@westminster.gov.uk.
You will receive a response from the team within 14 days.

Funding opportunities

There are funding sources available to support neighbourhood planning. All groups writing a neighbourhood plan or Neighbourhood Development Order will be eligible to apply for up to £9,000 in a basic neighbourhood planning grant. Groups facing more complex issues can apply for additional grant funding for up to £8,000 (in addition to the basic grant) or for specific packages of technical support, in the same application.

For further details of the funding opportunities you can access, use the following links from the neighbourhood planning website.

- Basic neighbourhood planning grant
- Additional grant funding
- Technical support

There are also opportunities to receive advice from consultants if you feel that you would benefit from more intensive planning support, to help you with specific parts of the process. If the cost of a consultant exceeds the grant allocated to the forum, it will need to be funded by the forum and the council will not provide any funding to support this. It may however be possible to use neighbourhood CIL for these purposes, subject to agreement of the scope of any consultant support.

Online guidance

If you want to create a neighbourhood plan, there is a wealth of excellent guidance available online. This guide provides links to a wide range of other sources of neighbourhood planning advice and information. Locality's bespoke neighbourhood planning website is the most useful online tool to help you prepare for the neighbourhood planning process. Two particular documents are worth paying attention to:

- How to create a neighbourhood plan: Your step by step roadmap guide
- Neighbourhood Planning Grant & Technical Support Guidance Notes

The following list provides other helpful links to neighbourhood planning guidance available online. It is not an exhaustive list and if you find another resource that has been particularly helpful, we encourage you to share it with us so we can share it with other forums.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)	Sets out the national requirements for the neighbourhood planning system including key stages and decisions (e.g. deciding neighbourhood areas, the legal tests for neighbourhood plans, and the process of independent examination and referendum).
Forum for Neighbourhood Planning	Helpful to learn from other neighbourhood forums' experiences and for posting questions on a forum.
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities	Provides update bulletins on neighbourhood plan progress nationally, including links to new resources as they become available.
Twitter #neighbourhoodplanning	Useful for getting inspiration and following links to other's activities.

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SECTION 5: MEETING THE BASIC CONDITIONS

Planning regulations

To be successful at examination, a neighbourhood plan must meet several tests, known as the 'basic conditions'.

These are that it must:

- Have regard to national policy;
- Contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- Conform with strategic policies adopted in the statutory development plan; and
- Conform with EU obligations.

Throughout the development of your neighbourhood plan we can offer advise on how to meet these basic conditions. Helping you to meet them will be a key focus of our advice.

National policy

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), national policy outlines general planning principles and leaves the detail to local and neighbourhood plans. Policies in the NPPF must be considered when preparing a neighbourhood plan. However, it does not dictate how your plan should be written or the planning outcomes. It is a framework for producing distinctive neighbourhood plans which meet local needs. The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) provides guidance on statutory processes for neighbourhood forums and planning authorities, as well as the application of national policy.

Sustainable development

Sustainable development is about balancing social, economic and environmental objectives. One way of demonstrating your plan does this is through an accompanying sustainability appraisal, similar to that incorporated into the City Plan Integrated Impact Assessment.

We can discuss with you the options for evidencing how your plan delivers sustainable development. A number of practical examples are listed in the Locality

guide 'How to create a neighbourhood plan: Your step by step roadmap guide' (see page 43). The PPG also outlines how your plan can demonstrate sustainable development.

Strategic policies in the statutory development plan

Neighbourhood plans need to be in general conformity with the strategic policies contained in the statutory development plan for the area. In Westminster the statutory development plan currently consists of the London Plan and the Westminster City Plan. All policies in the London Plan are strategic, whilst Appendix 2 of the City Plan sets out which of its policies are strategic. Where we identify any parts of your neighbourhood plan that we do not think are in conformity with these policies, we will point these out to you.

EU obligations

Your neighbourhood plan must be consistent with EU obligations in order to be legally compliant, as EU environmental regulations are retained in UK law. The key obligations are whether the plan would have significant environmental effects or impacts on protected habitats. The council will carry out an Strategic Environmental Assessment(SEA) and Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening of your plan to assist with this. In the event that this does identify significant impacts, there may be need for further assessments such as a full SEA or HRA. We will discuss with you the steps that you need to take and what evidence needs to be produced to comply with the EU obligations.

Contact Us

If you have any questions about this guide, please contact the council at neighbourhoodplanning@westminster.gov.uk.
For general planning policy queries, please contact planningpolicy@westminster.gov.uk.

City of Westminster

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City of Westminster

Finance, Planning & Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	4 May 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Report It Review Update
Report of:	Sarah Williams *Head of Customer Experience and Digital*
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Finance and Council Reform
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	
Report Authors and Contact Details:	Rebecca Gordon Paul Seaborn **rgordon1@westminster.gov.uk**

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report sets out to inform the Policy and Scrutiny Committee of the progress made in the Report It Discovery and outlines next steps.

1.2 The Report It service aims to resolve street and estate-based issues in Westminster for residents, businesses, and visitors. This work is delivered under the Fairer Westminster Strategy commitment to the review and improvement of this crucial service. Significant discovery work has been undertaken to explore current and potential users needs in terms of 'reporting', 'tracking' and 'resolving' issues and a plan is now in place to re-design and deliver this transformation.

1.3 This discovery identified three highest issue volume services enabled by Report It: waste, highways and antisocial behaviour (noise). These areas will be the focus for the initial improvements representing over 80% of the reporting volumes.

1.4 A multi-method approach was used to uncover all pain points and needs across the reporting experience using surveys, one on one interviews and workshops to engage with stakeholders who use the service regularly. Over 550 people across all external and internal user groups were engaged during this period representing a significant discovery exercise.

1.5   The findings have been recently played back to residents, businesses, partners and officers with a commitment to update stakeholders via a new web page going live in April, detailing opportunities for them to be involved in the solutions development. The web page is not live; however a mock up can be found at the end of this document in Appendix B.

1.6   The discovery demonstrated a clear need to transform this service to improve the lives of residents and defined the problems users are facing when using the current Report It service. A roadmap (at 6.6) has been created to address these problems and transform the service.

1.7   A multi-disciplinary Product Team has been assembled under the new Digital and Innovation service to deliver these changes at pace. The team will work in an agile manner delivering new functionality when it is available rather than releasing improvements all at once, maximising on immediate benefits for users. This team will focus on the defined problems and test back with users regularly, putting them at the heart of the design of the future service.

1.8   This team will re-design and deliver a new Report It service which empowers those who live, work in and visit Westminster to manage their reporting needs with ease. In line with the discovery finding, 'most users would prefer to report via the Westminster Council website', the team will be taking a digital first approach to transform this service for users; whilst making sure regardless of channel chosen to Report It, they feel confident their report will be managed and met with an exceptional service.

2.   Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

1.   The discovery was extensive and was intended to demonstrate best practice in the research space for Westminster, please share your thoughts following your review of the survey data (attached). Does the committee agree this meets the expectations set out in the Fairer Westminster strategy around consultation and engagement?

2.   Are there any areas that haven't been captured by this research that the committee feels should be a priority in the re-design of Report It?

3.   When reviewing the roadmap and next steps, does the committee agree it meets the expectations set by and to be delivered for Westminster?

3. Background

3.1 The 'Report It' service provides a means for street based issues to be reported in Westminster for residents, businesses and visitors. Examples of these issues include fly tipping, graffiti, animal fouling, highways issues, and street noise. It does not currently cover estate based issues which are managed through Housing.

3.2 Under the Fairer Westminster Strategy, the Council committed to reviewing and improving this service. This discovery was undertaken to explore current and potential user needs in terms of 'reporting', 'tracking' and 'resolving' issues. This discovery was not limited to online reporting, but also covered other reporting methods including contact centre, email and in person.

3.3 The majority of UK local authorities use Fix My Street to assist residents to report these issues, others use a forms solution usually enabled by mapping functionality. There are currently no other strong competitors on the market with a mature end to end product in this space.

The service currently viewed as 'Report It' on the Westminster site is a mix of these solutions to accommodate different types of reports, with street based issues using Fix My Street and other issues (like noise) reported through a forms solution. This disparate approach to reporting issues along with lack of integration and consistency in service delivery has resulted in a confusing experience for customers leading to complaints about:

- Inconsistent or no updates on reports
- Reports being closed down with no contact or follow up and at times no resolution
- Lack of clarity on the appropriate resolver of the report (for example when it is a TFL road/asset)
- Resolving times unclear for each report type leading to follow up queries usually resulting in unnecessary emails or calls into the contact centre
- Longer term issues not managed or communicated in a manner that is satisfactory to the resident
- Issues the council cannot deal with not communicated clearly
- Issues with the reporting (Fix My Street) interface, e.g. the mapping pin accuracy has been raised a significant number of times
- Reporters are often unable to find the right category for their issue
- Inability to report estate based issues

3.4 The resolution of issues in the City is a key priority for residents, and as such it is imperative that any re-design considers all perspectives and ensures fair access to this service. The council has dealt with numerous complaints about the Report It service that are often escalated to senior leaders and Cabinet Members. While there have been complaints and feedback about the effectiveness of the report it tool, there has never before been an in depth discovery to fully understand the root causes that lead to this level of dissatisfaction and escalation. Therefore, a full discovery was undertaken to truly understand the core of these issues to ensure a future design both identifies and resolves, while supporting a reporting service fit for a modern city.

3.5 A multi-disciplinary team was set up to undertake the research, working with an external partner from October 22 to January 23 to develop a deeper understanding of the service experience. The scope of work was significant to ensure the needs of all existing (or potential) users of this service were captured to support the design of future improvements.

3.6   A new way of working for Digital and Innovation was rolled out in 2022 to refocus the delivery and design of technology in the council to be user centric and data focused. This comprehensive discovery is the first step in this approach to deliver council services that really solve the problems Westminster residents, businesses and visitors face. By ensuring the problem is understood first, the value communities receive from Council services is maximised and costly tactical solutions that only solve symptoms of the problem are avoided.

3.7   This approach puts communities at the heart of the design and delivery of council services as set out in the Fairer Westminster Strategy, delivering on the manifesto commitment to review and improve this service, a key priority for Digital and Innovation.

4.   **Discovery**

4.1   This discovery is the largest discovery undertaken to date within Digital & Innovation, reflecting the scale of the Report It service and the number of residents who rely on it to resolve issues in their neighbourhood. It is essential that the design and delivery of the future service is centred around these users. The work will seek to solve both the problems found in the current solution and enhance the experience of Westminster Council services in the future by unlocking the power of new technologies such as automation and AI.

4.2   A multi-method approach was taken to reflect research best practice, details of the engagement events undertaken as part of the discovery are outlined in the table at **4.6**.

4.3   To guarantee any previous work was built on rather than replicated, a desk research exercise was undertaken to collate any previous work that may impact or inform the work on Report it and reviewed.

4.4   During the desk research competitor analysis was undertaken with similar services from both the public and private sector explored to understand best practice and inspire the route forward. Examples include Give Blood, Amazon and Cheshire West and Chester council. These services demonstrated intuitive User experience, Innovation (e.g. using QR codes on bins) and transparent and clear updates. Findings showed a significant number of Local Authorities use Fix My Street and many of the issues Westminster residents face are replicated nationally.

4.5   Communication and engagement with stakeholders are at the core of the new ways of working and how this discovery has been approached. To this end a number of engagement activities were undertaken during the discovery to bring stakeholders along for the journey and give an opportunity for them to shape the future of the service, detailed below:

4.6 Discovery Engagement Events

Engagement Event	Audience	Purpose
Report it Discovery Kick Off 4 October 23	Relevant WCC Service Representatives	To kick off the Discovery and gather initial thoughts and previous documentation.
Report It – Members Discovery Workshop 10 October 23	Westminster Ward & Cabinet Members	To introduce the purpose of the discovery and scope gathering feedback directly from Members.
External & Internal Survey (410 Responses) November 22 – January 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To understand the scale and priority of the issues using the service and engage with stakeholders. **Detailed analysis of the results can be found in Appendix A.**
Interviews (79) December 22-February 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To understand the scale and priority of the issues using the service and engage with stakeholders. This included contextual interviews to help the Report It Team to understand how the service fits into the everyday experience of people who live, work and do business in Westminster.
Report It Co-Creation Workshop (2) 10 & 11 Jan 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To work with stakeholders to design the solution following the interviews and surveys – co-creating ideas around an ideal service with those closest to the problem.
Report It Playback Session (2) 6 & 7 March 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To playback the findings of the discovery with stakeholders as well as the key issues found to validate the research and engage with stakeholders.
Deep Dive on Feedback with Services 29 March 23	Internal Services	To playback the findings of the discovery with officers in detail as well as the key issues found to validate the research and begin working towards a solution.

4.7   A number of quick wins were identified as part of the discovery as well as changes for the future Report It service, these will be delivered in an agile manner and are reflected in the roadmap at 6.6. This approach releases value to users as it's available and does not rely on full build before changes are made, delivering new content and functionality that can be experienced in the short term as well as the long term.

5.   Key Findings

5.1   Of those who engaged with the external survey about their experience of Report It (410 individuals) only 30% were satisfied with the current service.

Of this question, the majority of those who answered the survey who identified themselves as 60+ were either unsatisfied or did not answer this question with only 14% satisfied with the service. This is the group *least satisfied* with the Report it service.

The discovery showed when dissatisfied this often led to users expressing their unmet needs in different ways such as approaching Councillors, posting comments on social media and contacting officers directly. This led to additional workload for the Councillors, the contact centre and officers.

Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

Satisfied   Unsatisfied   Neither/ No Answer

122 (30.2%)
216 (53.5%)
66 (16.3%)
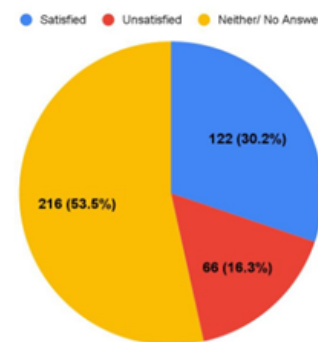
Summary of Survey Report (Full report in Appendix A)

- A high proportion of users received a response to their issue but felt it had not been solved
- When asked how they would like to Report It in the future, the majority of users wanted to report via the Westminster City Council website (which will be the focus for this work)
- The priority features users would value are:
  ➢ A timeframe for resolution
  ➢ Ability to track report progress
- 49% of 18-34 year olds who responded knew where to find the service but had never used it
- Only 14% of 60+ year olds who responded were satisfied with their report it experience

5.2   The most significant issues with the current service found during the discovery were:

- The user did not receive an update (and had no visibility of the status of their report)
- The map is hard to use and did not render well to a mobile device
- The user did not receive a reply with the outcome of their report
- The user could not find their issue to be able to submit a report
- Many users experienced their issue 'closed' by the council but not resolved, leading to dissatisfaction with the service
- Inefficiencies in the system results in a significant volume of email enquiries into the contact centre, with limited information provided to enable the team to effectively handle the enquiry

- When escalating an existing report to a Contact Centre Advisor there was limited or no information on the history of the report or action taken for the contact centre team to be able to resolve the enquiry which often leads to duplicate reports and additional workload
- The current solution does not allow fast and easy reporting of issues due to:
  - The reporter required to undertake a significant number of steps to get to the correct reporting form
  - Accuracy issues with the location pin on the map
  - Technical language used in the forms or categories causing confusion (e.g. 'Flytipping', 'Dockless Bikes'), often resulting in issues being reported to the wrong place

5.3 Listed below are elements of the service that had high levels of satisfaction and should be maintained and enhanced in the future reporting experience:

- Ability to remain anonymous
- The swiftness of which some issues (particularly waste and cleansing) are resolved
- The service received from specific officers, and the care undertaken to resolve issues
- A copy of your report sent to you for follow up purposes along with a reference number
- Ability to receive a report on existing issues logged in your postcode area

5.4 The highest volume service areas that receive reports are: Waste, Highways and ASB (Noise). These reporting groups make up over 80% of total reports received and are a clear focus for the initial work on this service.

5.5 Four themes emerged from the discovery work with the key findings within each theme listed below:

Content
- The current method of a customer selecting what they are reporting is confusing and overly onerous on the User. Technical or confusing language is used such as 'Fly tipping' and 'Dockless Bikes' leading to reports often reported to the wrong team or a customer feeling frustrated and choosing to resolve their issue through the contact centre.
- It is currently unclear what the council can and cannot resolve. This lack of clarity results in a user taking the time to complete a report to discover later that the council is unable to manage the issue. This leads to frustration both from a user and an officer perspective and handover to a partner which may not be completed, or the council may have lack of visibility on.
- There is a lack of consistency in the language used across the solution. This can lead to increased difficulties in navigating a report especially for those with accessibility needs or another primary language.

Technology
- The current level of integration with systems used by officers is not sufficient and doesn't support a seamless experience and feedback on reports. This absence of feedback on progress and resolution can result in frustration, unnecessary calls and emails to the Council and a reluctance to use the online service in the future.
- The current interface does not support a quick and easy way to report – it was often described as 'clunky' or 'difficult to use' due to the mapping tools and inability to pre-populate contact details from an account.
- There are significant technology advancements that may enhance the service the council is not currently using including: AI, Smart Automation, Enhanced Search

functionality. There is an expectation from users that these advancements be utilised in a future solution.

- The use of different technologies and tactical solutions has resulted in an inconsistent experience for users which does not reflect best practice to support accessibility or a great user experience.

Data

- There is no current public visibility of how the council uses its data proactively to solve long standing issues. There is therefore a perception that the council is not using the data in a strategic manner resulting in a lack of confidence from residents when reporting.
- The current level of data maturity does not support a 'single view' for users' interactions with the council. A view of all reports made by an individual will both enable a resident to manage their reports and allow a personalised view of interactions across departments to enhance the experience and come to swifter resolutions.
- Not all current forms prompt the reporter to supply the correct data for the report to be progressed resulting in frustration for the reporter when an officer follows up to collect this.

Organisational

- The use of different approaches to resolving issues in each service has resulted in an inconsistent experience for users which reflects the levels of satisfaction with the current service.
- There is an expectation that the standard of service be comparable across all reporting channels, due to standard not currently defined the experience is disparate and inconsistent.
- Relationships and referral routes to partners are not mature enough, resulting in teams often unable to chase updates for matters referred. This can lead to a perception that the council is exceeding expected timeframes and impact negatively on the reputation of the Council and Report It service.
- The approach to delivery of services is often not prioritised effectively leading to the council managing high priority and low priority issues in the same manner, impacting negatively on the effectiveness of the service and perception.

5.9   The table below summarises the priority focus areas for improvement following Discovery.
Reporters: Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Ward/Cabinet Members, Council Officers (to refer to other council areas)
Resolvers: Council Officers, Partners (including Met Police, BIDs, Charities..)

Underlying Focus Areas	Issues for Reporters	Issues for Resolvers
Content	Technical or confusing language used (Dockless Bikes, Cycle Hangers, Fly tipping) leading to difficulty finding how to report and reports often sent to the wrong service.	Unnecessary workload from having to send reports internally to the right department due to miscategorising. Complaints due to SLAs exceeded as report sent to wrong department.
	Information around what the Council do or do not deal with (for specific services like noise) is not clear. This can lead to an expectation a report is going to be dealt with and disappointment and frustration if it cannot be.	Unnecessary workload from invalid reports, direct contact and social media.
	The route to finding where to report an issue is too complex and time consuming which leads to frustration and using other routes such as calls or emails to report their issue.	Additional effort to manage calls and emails. Reporting forms do not gather enough information to effectively classify, prioritise and resolve issues.
Technology & Data	Current status updates are not satisfactory for users and anonymous users are currently unable to receive any updates. This results in unnecessary calls received to chase issues, some of which cannot be resolved effectively if a customer has not given contact information in their original report (GDPR).	Additional effort to manage calls and emails.
	There is a perception the Council are not using data effectively to prioritise certain hot spots or take preventative action.	Numerous systems and a lack of unified data are a constraint to achieving a single view of the problem (including linking related issues) and data driven prevention.
	The experience across different reporting journeys lacks consistency and means the solution isn't fully accessible and it is evident to the customer multiple solutions are in use.	Numerous systems and a lack of unified data make it difficult to achieve a single view of the issue and the customer and to delivering a seamless experience across channels.
	Users do not have a single view of their reports or ability to link reports, resulting in an experience that is not optimal.	
Organisational	The experience for reporters is inconsistent. Some experiences are excellent with the service and resolvers (Council Officers) whilst some are very poor. Without organisational standards for this the experience will remain disappointing for some.	The lack of standards and consistency in approach to service delivery impacts on the council and Report It reputation as a whole and can be frustrating for council employees – especially those who provide a consistently excellent experience.

6.0   Next Steps

6.1   Playback of this research was completed in March to stakeholders and the team will continue to engage with these users frequently to playback progress and test prototypes and ideas. These events will be published on the dedicated webpage to ensure transparency in approach and allow broader engagement.

6.2   As part of the new operating model for Digital & Innovation, a new Report It Product Team (user centred and multi-disciplinary) has been established to design and develop the new solution. The team are delivering to a product roadmap (6.6) and have a specific problem and user driven focus to solve the problems faced now and in the future. Report It will be an exemplar service, defining and demonstrating the way digital solutions are designed and delivered in Westminster in the future.

6.3   Quick Wins
Since the team was established in January, the current reporting map graphics have been improved utilising an improvement available through Fix My Street, this improvement has been met with positive feedback with location of assets much clearer for reporters.

6.4   The team will work at pace in an agile manner delivering new functionality when it is available, rather than releasing improvements all at once. The focus of delivery is in the following areas:

Content
- Improved categorisation – Find the right place to report the issue first time
- Accessible content – Clear, simple and easy to understand
- Simple forms – Adhering to GDS standard to support quick and easy reporting

Technology
- Updates – Progress and status are clear to the reporter
- New Technology – Innovating to deliver an exceptional experience
- End to end integration – Supporting seamless experience

Data
- Intelligence driven – Using data to drive insights and resolve long-term issues
- Ability to link and view multiple reports – to drive results and enhance the experience

Organisational
- Setting the standard – Consistently excellent experience
- Prioritisation – Value of services is maximised

Quick wins identified in the discovery will be deployed when available to deliver value in the short term as well as the long term.

6.5   This team will re-design and deliver a new Report It service which empowers those who live, work in and visit Westminster to manage their reporting needs with ease. In line with the discovery finding, 'most users would prefer to report via the Westminster Council website', the team will be taking a digital first approach to transform this service for users; whilst making sure regardless of channel chosen to Report It, they feel confident their report will be managed and are met with an exceptional service. The steps to this transformation are articulated in the roadmap below.

6.6 Draft Improvements Roadmap

This is an indication of the work to be undertaken over the next period to deliver value in the short, medium, and long term. This roadmap is evolving as user priorities are further defined, influenced and driven by what our Reporters and Resolvers want and need from this service. The prototype refers to an online service via the Westminster City Council website, an app may be explored in the future, but findings showed this is not the primary way most users want to access the service.

Next Steps

	April to June	July to September	September to December
Content	Define ideal journey map changes on existing site to improve: - Website Content - Reporting categorisation; Improvements to content and language/categories	Measuring benefits; Improvements to content and language/categories; Improved website content (with services); Reviewed communications to support status updates (emails, notifications)	Scale up across the service; Improvements to content and language/categories; Improved website content (with services); Reviewed communications to support status updates (emails, notifications)
Technology	Mock up prototype status updates (emails, notifications, status bar) and test with users; Engage with partners to understand and define technology to be used in the future based on ideal journey; Email updates; Define automated categorisation (Image AI, Automated validation); Chatbot tested	Role out changes that users found effective into existing solution to improve the immediate experience & measure benefits; Build prototype based on ideal journeys for 3 key areas and test with users; Prototype 1 Built (& Tested) with users	Incorporate effective changes into future solution; First release of end to end Solution (Public Beta)
Data	Design how we support a single view of all reports from an individual to enhance the service experience	Deliver future solution to support: Status updates and transparency on report process, Linking reports, Seamless ability to follow up on reports, Ability to act proactively and share how we use report data in the future; Single view of reports through account functionality; Ability to link reports automatically	
Organisational	Define 'standard' exemplar approach to how we deliver services in collaboration with the organisation	Prioritisation reviewed and agreed with services to support better service delivery; Role out across the organisation to deliver a consistent customer experience across all categories so customers expectations are met when reporting **all** issues; Service standards defined and rolled out across all reporting services	

Focus

Deliverables

APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Survey Summary

Appendix B - Webpage Mock up (DRAFT)

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Westminster City Council
Report It Survey Report

Updated January 2023

Update: Jan 2023

An initial report of the survey was conducted using data from 12th Dec 2022 when 145 participants had completed it. A further review of the survey has now been conducted using data from 18th Jan 2023 as participant numbers rose to 404, with an increase across the younger age groups.

As such, the survey responses have also been grouped into 3 age groups for further analysis:

- 16-24 yr olds
- 35-59 yr olds
- 60+ yr olds

These groups each represent approximately a third of the total participants. (NB. Those participants who did not disclose an age have been excluded from this part of the review).

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Executive Summary

An online survey was conducted about Report it, to understand from residents and businesses:

- What is being reported
- Their awareness of Report It
- Their experience of Report It
- Expectations for the Report It service

Key takeouts

- Out of 404 participants, there was a broad demographic mix, with the largest groups being White British, under 45 years of age and those in work
- The majority of participants had experienced a problem within the last month, with the top three problems being:
  - Street cleanliness
  - Antisocial behaviour
  - Road related problems
- Housing Issues were also high amongst the 16-34 yr old participants.
- A high proportion of the participants had heard of, were familiar with or had used Report It
  - Almost two thirds of 35-59 yr olds, were very familiar and had used the Report it before
  - Nearly half of 16-34 yr olds knew where to find it, but had not used it
- Most participants contacted the Council about the problem with the single biggest group having used Report It
  - Highest within the 35-59 yr olds where almost 60% used Report It.
- Overall of those participants who reported the problem, nearly a third did not receive a reply or did not know the outcome
  - However over 85% of 16-34 yr olds received a reply, with almost half of these resulting in a resolution

Key takeouts (continued)

- Only 30% of participants agreed that they were satisfied with the outcome
  - This dropped to 14% for 60+ yr olds
- The vast majority of participants experienced problems using Report It, with the most common issues across all age groups being:
  - Not receiving an update or reply
  - The map was hard to use
  - They could not find their issue
- Problems uploading photos and using Report It on a mobile device were also highlighted
- Most participants expressed a preference for reporting problems via the website/ app or email
  - Participants in the 35-59 yr old group had the highest response for reporting via the Westminster Council website and also reporting via an app
- Receiving a case number for a reported problem was important to three quarters of participants and very important to 42% of the participants
  - This was more important to 60+ yr olds with 63% rating it as very important
- Most felt that receiving an email recording their report was important and for 44% of participants it was very important
  - This was more important to 60+ yr olds with 70% rating it as very important
- Being able to track the progress of the problem they reported was very important to over half of all participants
- Over half of the participants in each age group feel it is very important to be given a timeframe within which their problem will be responded to
- Easily providing location information and photo evidence was very important to the majority of participants, particularly in the 35-59 and 60+ age groups
- Being able to track the progress of an issue and being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded was an important issue for all age groups
- Most participants would like the option to report problems anonymously
  - This was a more important issue to the 16-34 yr olds and 35 - 59 yr olds with 85% and 81% of participants responding Yes respectively
- The majority of participants expect a response (but not resolution) to problems they report within a day

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Recommendations

These recommendations are based solely on the survey findings. They will be used in Discovery to plan the next phases of user research, as well as supporting the final recommendations.

- Focus on the services that can resolve the top issues for residents. These include:
  - Waste for dumped rubbish and street cleaning
  - Highways for road maintenance and pot holes
  - ASB for noise
  - Licensing for illegal activity, e.g. street traders
- Review the communication after an issue is reported   - especially in the first 24 hours of submitting a report
  - Residents most need a reference number and an initial email
  - An ability to track progress or have updates is also important
- Explore anonymous reporting with services
  - Residents have expressed a big interest in this, but how will this impact services that may need personal details for communication?
- Review the current systems for any bugs or issues that impact reporting, e.g. problems logging in or uploading photos
- Review the qualitative findings to understand why issues could not be resolved, as nearly a third of participants reported issues that were not resolved

Overall, the Report It service should…

- be mobile first - either as a mobile native application or fully mobile responsive web application
- Enable users to:
  - clearly categorise their report without restricting them to options that exclude them
  - report the problem in their own words
  - add the location of the problem
  - upload multiple photographs
  - report issues anonymously, if they choose
- Provide users with:
  - an immediate email record of the report
  - a report ID/ reference number that enables them to track the status and progress of the problem they reported
  - an estimated timescale for the problem to be reviewed and resolved
- Enable users to track the status and progress of the problem they have reported
  - Using the report ID/ reference number so they can return to Report It to easily find information about what they reported
- Email updates to users quoting the report ID/ reference number and summarising the status and progress

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Methodology

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Survey approach

The survey was set up and run by the WCC communications team. It was shared across social media, across council newsletters and on the website, specifically on the Report It page.

Report It Survey Questions:

1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month? If you haven't experienced any issues, please click the next page button below.
2. Thinking about the most serious issue you experienced, what, if anything, did you do?
3. What was the outcome?
4. Which of the following best describes your knowledge and experience of Westminster Council's Report It service?
5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?
6. Have you ever experienced any of the following issues when using Report It? Please select all that apply.
7. In the future, if you experienced an issue on the streets of Westminster and wanted to let the council know about it, what would you prefer to do?
8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features?
   1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue
   2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council
   3. Being able to track the progress of my issue
   4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to
   5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue
   6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue
9. Would you like the option of being able to report issues anonymously?
10. After reporting your issue, how long do you expect it would take to be reviewed and for you to get a response back? (Please note this does not mean that a solution has been found, but only that we are working on solving it)
11. What one thing should Westminster Council focus on to improve the experience of reporting issues?
12. Do you have any final comments?

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Respondents

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Demographics

Can you please tell us your age on your last birthday?

Most were under 45 years old, making up 51% of respondents.

- **19-24**   **10%**
- **25-34**   **26%**
- **35-44**   **16%**
- 45-49   6%
- 50-54   5%
- 55-59   9%
- 60-64   6%
- 65-74   8%
- 75+   8%
- Prefer not to say   5%

What gender do you identify with?

There were more female than male participants, differing from Westminster's demographics (slightly more males than females, 53/47).

- **Female**   **56%**
- Male   40%
- Prefer not say   4%

Can you please tell us your age on your last birthday?

16-24   25-34   35-44   45-49   50-54   55-59   60-64   65-74   75+   Prefer not to say
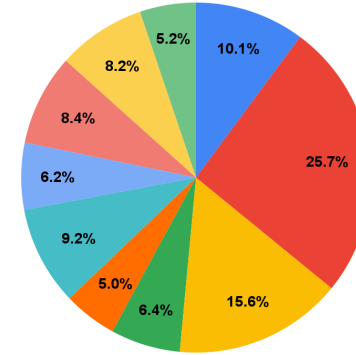
What gender do you identify with?

Female   Male   Prefer not to say

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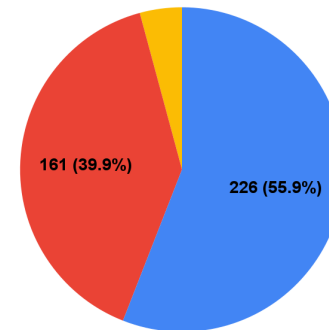
Ethnicity

This was more skewed to White British than the Westminster population, where 31% is from the Global Majority.

- **White British**   **49%**
- White Other   24%
- Asian   7%
- Black   5%
- Other ethnic group   8%
- I'd prefer not to disclose this   7%

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To which of the following groups do you consider you belong?

Legend: White British, White other, Asian, Black, Other ethnic group, Prefer not to say

- 48.8%
- 24.3%
- 6.7%
- 4.7%
- 8.4%
- 7.2%
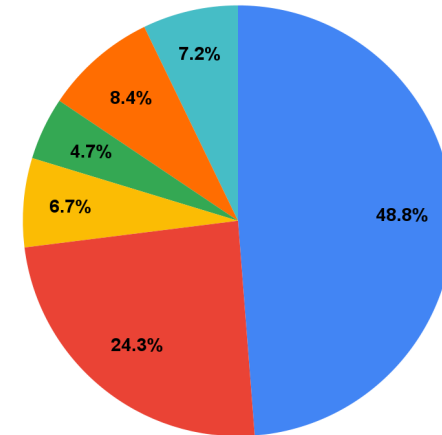
Employment & Disability

Work Status

While the majority work full time, just over 15% are retired.

- **Working - full time (30+ hrs)** — **45%**
- Retired/ semi retired — 16%
- Irregular work — 8%
- Freelance/ self employed — 8%
- Working - part time (17-29 hrs) — 7%
- Not currently working — 6%
- Full time mum/ carer — 2%
- Student/ work programme / apprenticeship — 3%
- Prefer not to say — 4%

Are your day -to day activities impacted by a health problem or disability?

Most respondents' are not impacted by health or disability, but around 35% are. It was not clear how, so the impact could be physical or affect how they browse online.

- **No** — **60%**
- Yes, limited a little — 22%
- Yes, limited a lot — 13%
- Prefer not to say — 5%

Please tell us which of the following best describes you. Are you...?

- Not currently working
- Full time mum/ carer
- Student/ work programme / apprenticeship
- Working - full time (30+ hrs)
- Working - part time (17-29 hrs)
- Irregular work
- Freelance/ self employed
- Retired/ semi retired
- Prefer not to say

- 6.2%
- 15.6%
- 8.2%
- 7.9%
- 7.2%
- 45.0%
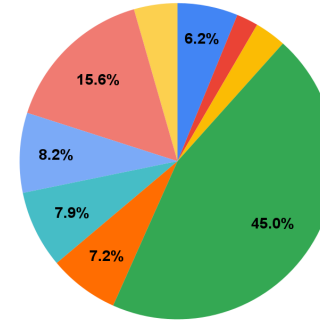
Are your day-to-day activities impacted by a health problem or disability?

- No
- Yes, limited a little
- Yes, limited a lot
- Prefer not to say
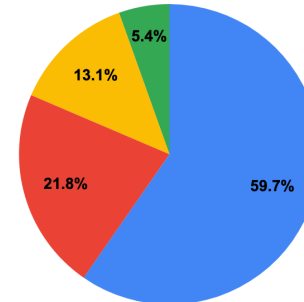
- 5.4%
- 13.1%
- 21.8%
- 59.7%

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What is being reported?

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Q1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month?

91% of participants had experienced at least one of the problem types in the last month, with street cleanliness and ASB being the top issues for residents.

- **Street cleanliness e.g. fly tipping/missed refuse collection**   **45%**
- **Anti-social behaviour e.g. dog fouling/smells/noise**   **45%**
- Road related e.g. potholes   32%
- Illegal activity e.g. planning breaches, illegal street trading, entertainment or advertising   20%
- Vehicle related e.g. abandoned vehicles   20%
- Parks, open spaces and trees   10%
- Housing issues e.g. faulty lift   23%
- Other   23%

Over half (**56%**) of participants had experienced more then one problem type in the last month. This does not take into account how often this issue occurs, e.g. persistent noise.

- No problems in the last month   9%
- **1 problem type**   **35%**
- 2 problem types   25%
- 3 problem types   19%
- 4 problem types   7%
- 5 or more problem types   5%

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Q1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month?

Category	Count
Vehicle related	75
Road related	116
Housing issues	86
Anti-social behaviour	164
Street cleanliness	165
Illegal activity	72
Parks, open spaces and trees	38
Other	84

Number of problems witnessed in the last month

Legend: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+

- 0: 9.2%
- 1: 34.7%
- 2: 25.0%
- 3: 18.8%
- 4: 6.9%
- 5+: 5.4%

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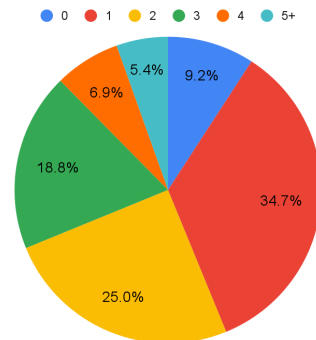
Q1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month?

In each age group, over **88%** of participants had experienced at least one of the problem types in the last month. ASB and Street Cleanliness/ Road Related issues were high amongst all age groups, however 16-34 yr olds also reported Housing Issues as a top issue.

For **16-34 yr olds** , the top 3 issues were:

- Housing issues e.g. faulty lift   39%
- Anti -social behaviour e.g. dog fouling/smells/noise   39%
- Road related e.g. potholes   33%

For **35-59 yr olds** , the top 3 issues were:

- Street cleanliness e.g. fly tipping/missed refuse collection   53%
- Anti-social behaviour e.g. dog fouling/smells/noise   49%
- Road related e.g. potholes   33%

For **60+ yr olds**   , the top 3 issues were:

- Street cleanliness e.g. fly tipping/missed refuse collection   56%
- Anti-social behaviour e.g. dog fouling/smells/noise   44%
- Other   42%
  - Including
    - "Over-numerous abandoned hire bikes and scooters everywhere"
    - "Pavement related. I.e. no gritting, no salting."
    - "Street light out for several months"

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Q1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month?
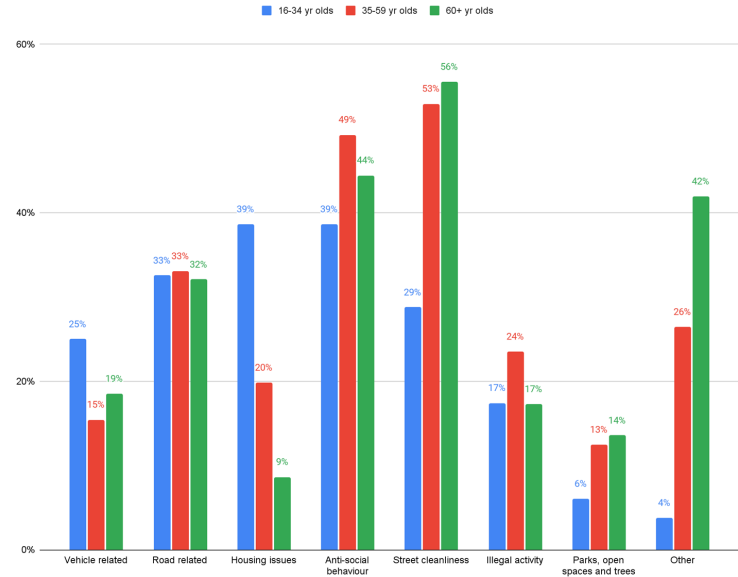
Q1. Have you experienced or witnessed any problems on the streets in the last month?

In each age group, over **88%** of participants had experienced at least one of the problem types in the last month, with those in the **35-59** and **60+ yr old** groups experiencing **multiple problems** :

For **16-34 yr olds** :

●	No problems in the last month	9%
●	1 problem type	**43%**
●	2 problem types	23%
●	3 or more problem types	25%

For **35-59 yr olds** :

●	No problems in the last month	8%
●	1 problem type	29%
●	2 problem types	25%
●	3 or more problem types	**38%**

For **60+ yr olds** :

●	No problems in the last month	12%
●	1 problem type	**30%**
●	2 problem types	27%
●	3 or more problem types	**30%**

Number of problems witnessed in the last month
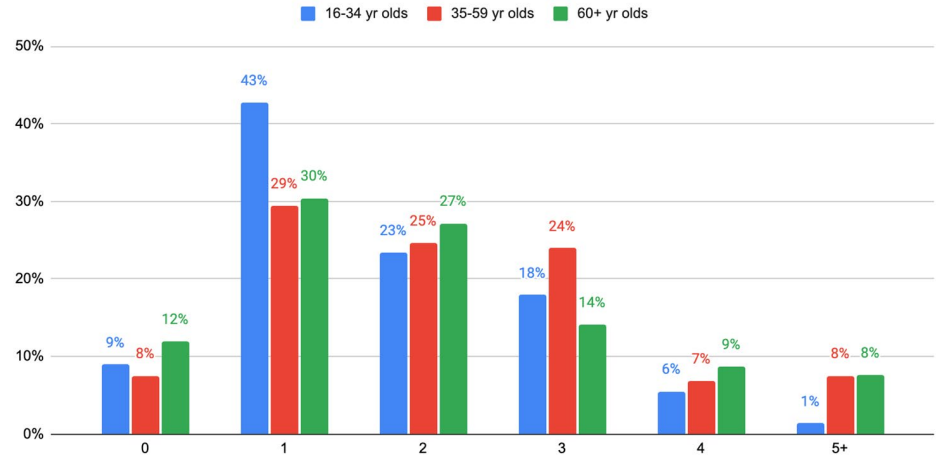
Q2. Thinking about the most serious issue you experienced, what, if anything, did you do?

As expected from this survey, most would use Report It (50%), however there were still around 10% that would do nothing.

- **Used the Report it service on the WCC website**   **50%**
  - Though 2.7% mentioned issues using it, such as no appropriate problem type and no option to report as a business
- Speak to a friend, family member or neighbour   31%
- Email a council officer directly   27%
- Email a councillor   14%
- Call the Contact Centre   21%
- Nothing   10%
- Share on social media   15%
- Other   13%

Just under half (**43%**) of participants reported the issue in more that one way:

- No response   9%
- **1 reporting type   48%**
- 2 reporting types   24%
- 3 reporting types   15%
- 4+ reporting types   5%

Q2. Thinking about the most serious issue you experienced, what, if anything, did you do?
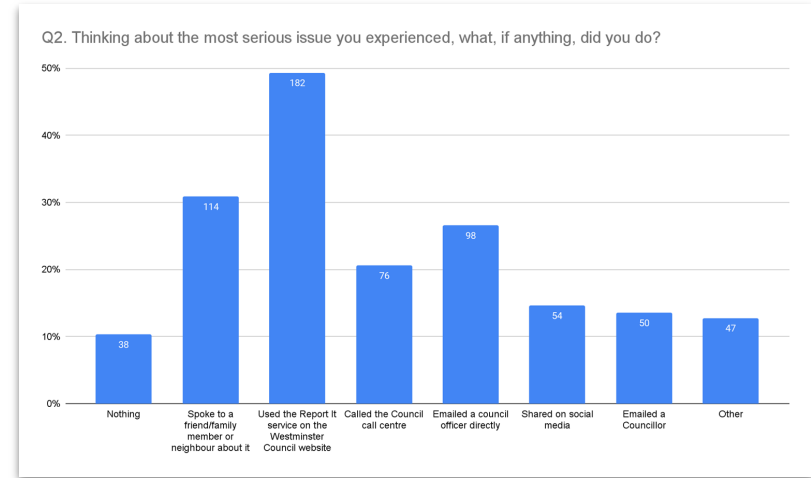
Responses from 13% of the participants also described other ways they had tried to report the problems they experienced.

- Most mentioned contacting other sources
  - "Discussed it with our Chairman of our Board for the next Board meeting"
  - "Notified local residents association who reported it to the Council."
  - "Informed the Police / Called 999"
- Contacting source of the issue directly
  - "Phoned the licensed premises to complain directly"

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Q2. Thinking about the most serious issue you experienced, what, if anything, did you do?

In each age group the majority would **use Report It** , however this was significantly higher in the **35-59 yr olds** where almost **60%** chose this option.

Speaking to a friend, family member or neighbour was also in the top 3 of each group.

For **16-34 yr olds** , the top 3 actions were:

Used the Report it service on the WCC website	47%
Speak to a friend, family member or neighbour	39%
Email a council officer directly	35%

For **35-59 yr olds** , the top 3 actions were:

Used the Report it service on the WCC website	59%
Speak to a friend, family member or neighbour	27%
Email a council officer directly	25%

For **60+ yr olds** , the top 3 actions were:

Used the Report it service on the WCC website	35%
Other	29%
Speak to a friend, family member or neighbour	24%

Q2. Thinking about the most serious issue you experienced, what, if anything, did you do?
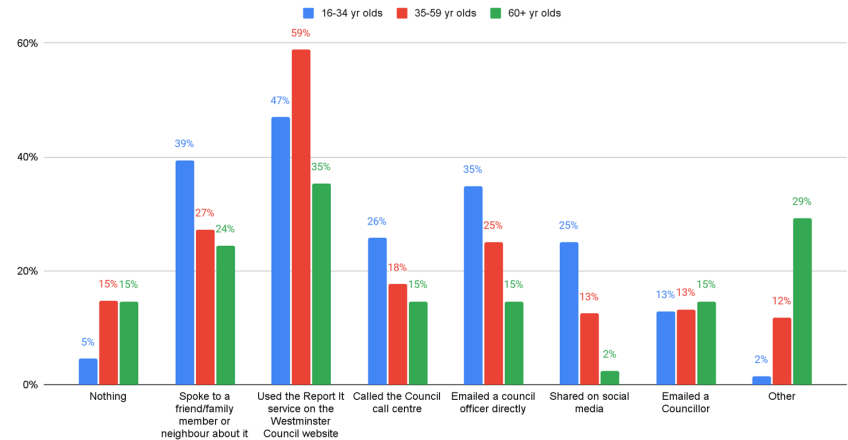
Just over half (**52%**) of 16-34 yr old participants reported the issue in more that one way compared to 43% for 35-59 yr olds and 34% for 60+ yr olds.

Over a quarter of 60+ yr old participants listed other ways in which they would report a problem with the majority contacting another source directly:

ZOOCHA

Q3. What was the outcome?

Of the people who responded to this question, almost a third (**30%**) either did not receive a reply or did not know the outcome.

- **Received a reply but the problem was not solved**   **43%**
- Received a reply and the problem was solved   27%
- Did not receive a reply   19%
- Don't know   11%

However, **46% of participants DID NOT respond to this question**.

Page 97

Q3. What was the outcome?

● Did not receive a reply   ● Don't know
● Received a reply and the problem was solved
● Received a reply but the problem was not solved

41 (18.8%)
24 (11.0%)
93 (42.7%)
60 (27.5%)

ZOOCHA
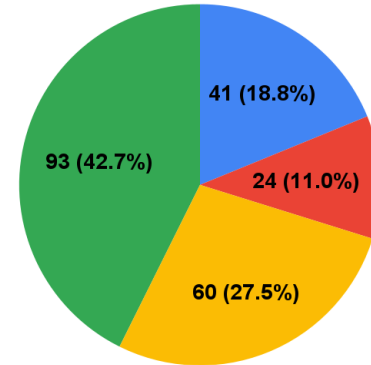
Q3. What was the outcome?

Of the people who responded to this question, over **85%** of **16-34 yr olds** received a reply, with almost half of these resulting in a resolution.

However this was lower in the other age groups, where 35% of 35-59 yr olds and 45% of 60+ yr olds either did not receive a reply or did not know the outcome.

Across all age groups **45-49% of participants DID NOT respond to this question** .

For **16-34 yr olds** , the outcomes were:
- Received a reply but the problem was <u>not</u> solved   46%
- Received a reply and the problem was solved   41%
- Did not receive a reply   11%
- Don't know   3%

For **35-59 yr olds** , the outcomes were:
- Received a reply but the problem was <u>not</u> solved   41%
- Received a reply and the problem was solved   25%
- Did not receive a reply   20%
- Received a reply and the problem was solved   14%

For **60+ yr olds** , the outcomes were:
- Received a reply but the problem was <u>not</u> solved   37%
- Did not receive a reply   18%
- Don't know   25%
- Received a reply and the problem was solved   20%

Q3. What was the outcome?

Legend: Don't know | Did not receive a reply | Received a reply but the problem was not solved | Received a reply and the problem was solved

ZOOCHA

FAIRER WESTMINSTER | City of Westminster
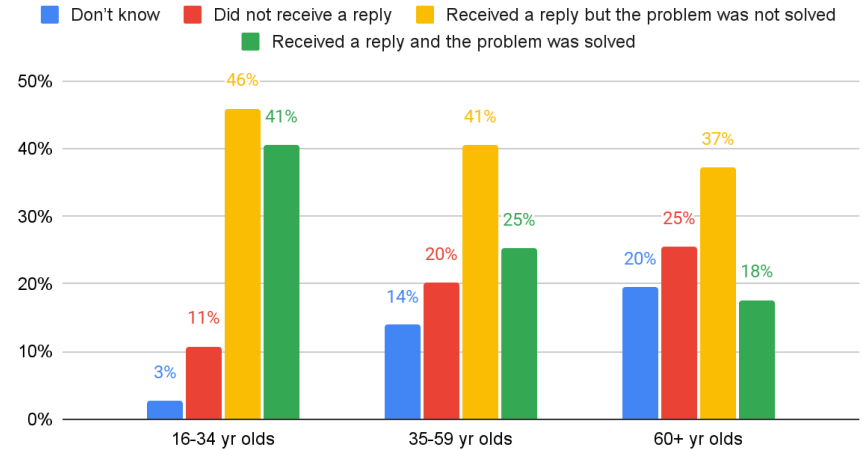
Awareness of Report It

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Q4. Which of the following best describes your knowledge and experience of Westminster Council's Report It service?

Awareness in the survey is high - the majority of participants (**90%**) had at least heard of the Report It services.

- Over half of participants (**53%**) were very familiar and had used the Report it service before
- **28%** knew where to find it, but had not used it
- **10%** had heard of it, but did not know how to find it

This shows a gap in the survey and research overall- what about residents and businesses that are not aware of Report It? Would they know what to do if they have an issue? If not, what would they do?

Q4. Which of the following best describes your knowledge and experience of Westminster Council's Report It service?

- I am very familiar with the service and have used it before
- I know what it is and where to find it but have not used it
- I have heard of it but don't know how to find it
- I have not heard about the service

39 (9.7%)
40 (9.9%)
212 (52.5%)
113 (28.0%)

ZOOCHA

Q4. Which of the following best describes your knowledge and experience of Westminster Council's Report It service?

Awareness in the survey is high, with **99%** of **16-34 yr olds** and **90%** of **35-59 yr olds** having at least heard of the Report It services. This is lower for the 60+ yr olds at 70%.

For participants in the 35-59 yr olds, almost two thirds of participants (**64%**) were very familiar and had used the Report it before. This is significantly higher than the other two age groups. Whereas nearly half (**49%**) of 16-34 yr olds knew where to find it, but had not used it.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the outcomes were:

- I am very familiar with the service and have used it before   41%
- I know what it is and where to find it but have not used it   49%
- I have heard of it but don't know how to find it   8%
- I have not heard about the service   1%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the outcomes were:

- I am very familiar with the service and have used it before   64%
- I know what it is and where to find it but have not used it   15%
- I have heard of it but don't know how to find it   11%
- I have not heard about the service   10%

For **60+ yr olds**, the outcomes were:

- I am very familiar with the service and have used it before   45%
- I know what it is and where to find it but have not used it   20%
- I have heard of it but don't know how to find it   13%
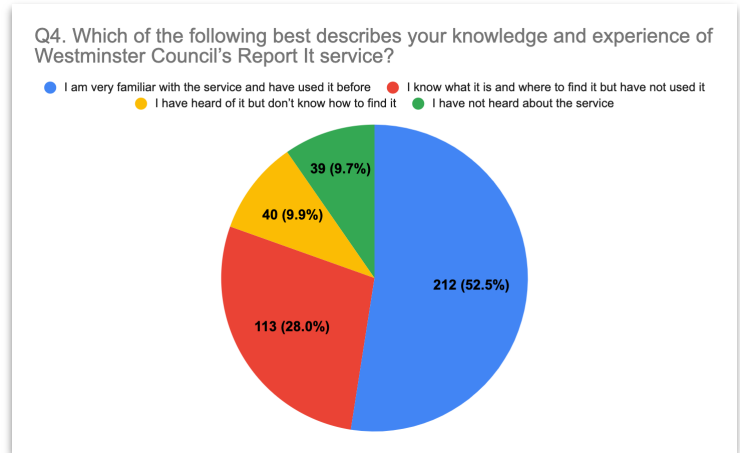- I have not heard about the service   23%

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ZOOCHA

Q4. Which of the following best describes your knowledge and experience of Westminster Council's Report It service?

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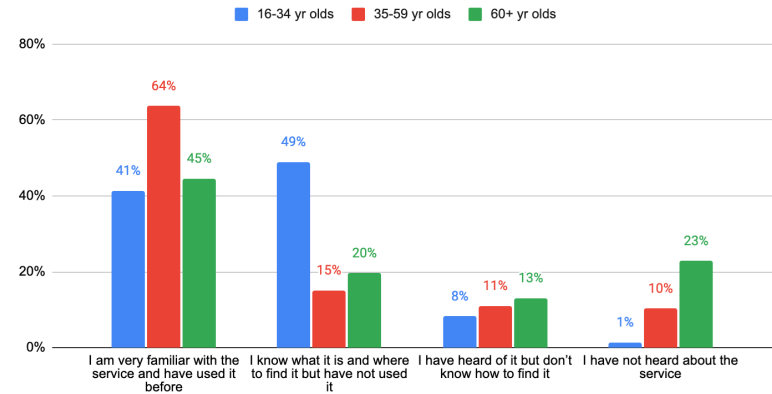
Experience with Report It

ZOOCHA

Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

The largest proportion of participants (**48%**) declined to answer the question.

There was a larger number of people satisfied (**30%**) than not satisfied (16%).

- **No answer**   **48%**
- Satisfied   30%
- Unsatisfied   16%
- Neither   6%

Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

● Satisfied   ● Unsatisfied   ● Neither/ No Answer

122 (30.2%)
66 (16.3%)
216 (53.5%)

ZOOCHA
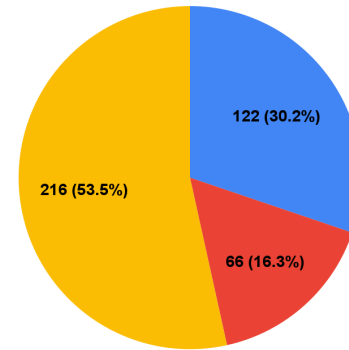
Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

The largest proportion of participants either expressed no opinion or declined to answer the question in each of the age groups.

In the **16-34 yr old** and **35-59 yr old** groups there was a larger number of people satisfied (**30%** and **38%** respectively) than not satisfied. However the reverse was true for those in the 60+ yr old group.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the outcomes were:
- Satisfied — 34%
- Unsatisfied — 6%
- Neither — 2%
- No Answer — 59%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the outcomes were:
- Satisfied — 38%
- Unsatisfied — 19%
- Neither — 4%
- No Answer — 38%

For **60+ yr olds**, the outcomes were:
- Satisfied — 14%
- Unsatisfied — 21%
- Neither — 10%
- No Answer — 55%
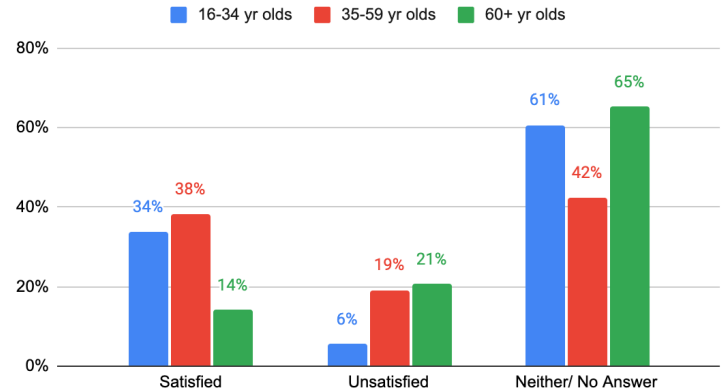
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Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

Legend: 16-34 yr olds, 35-59 yr olds, 60+ yr olds

	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Neither/ No Answer
16-34 yr olds	34%	6%	61%
35-59 yr olds	38%	19%	42%
60+ yr olds	14%	21%	65%

ZOOCHA

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Q6. Have you ever experienced any of the following issues when using Report It?

The majority of participants **(85%)** that responded to this question had experienced an issue when using the Report It services.

- The map was hard to use — **40%**
- I did not get an update — **39%**
- I did not get a reply — **34%**
- I could not find my issue — 23%
- It was hard to upload a photo — 16%
- Other (see next page) — 25%
- No issues experienced — 15%

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Q6. Have you ever experienced any of the following issues when using Report It?

ZOOCHA

FAIRER WESTMINSTER | City of Westminster
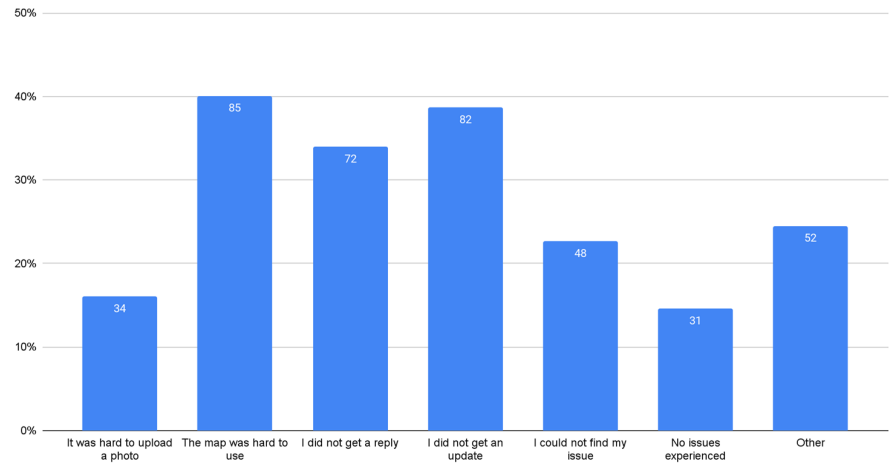
Q6. Other comments about using Report It

Map view should be on report it home page, not three clicks through. Officers should be able to respond and add notes that issues are in progress. Users should get a response and then an update when the job is completed.

There was no separation between tenants / lessees / common parts.

No update reply given to matters reported.

Incorrect reply and no way of challenging this: (reply did not accurately record my submission).

Very clunky.

Difficult to find updates / resolutions on issues

It's hard to use, especially on mobile.

Renders poorly on mobile phone which is best reporting tool.

It's a palaver logging in etc.

It was very user friendly and item was removed quickly.

It would be good to see incidents at sub ward level.

Anonymity is important.

Map jumps about.

Tough to drop a pin using an iPhone.

The issue should be what is reported first, so that people can get that off their chests. It should be possible to set this out in free text. All other refinements the Council needs can then follow in questionnaire format.

Generally when I report issues (mostly street washing needed) I am impressed at how quickly the street cleaning vans come around and fix the problem.

Always get an acknowledgement email but haven't always got an update or email to say resolved.

I believe I could only enter 3 photos.

Item I reported was deleted.

I did not receive a copy of my report despite providing my email address.

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ZOOCHA

Q6. Have you ever experienced any of the following issues when using Report It?

The majority of participants in all age groups **(over 82%)** that responded to this question had experienced an issue when using the Report It services.

For all age groups, issues using the **map** and **not receiving an update** were in the top two responses.

For **16-34 yr olds** , the top issues were:

- The map was hard to use 38%
- I did not get an update 32%
- I did not get a reply 32%
- I could not find my issue 32%

For **35-59 yr olds** , the top issues were:

- I did not get an update 45%
- The map was hard to use 41%
- I did not get a reply 37%

For **60+ yr olds** , the top issues were:

- The map was hard to use 46%
- I did not get an update 37%
- Other 32%

Q6. Have you ever experienced any of the following issues when using Report It?
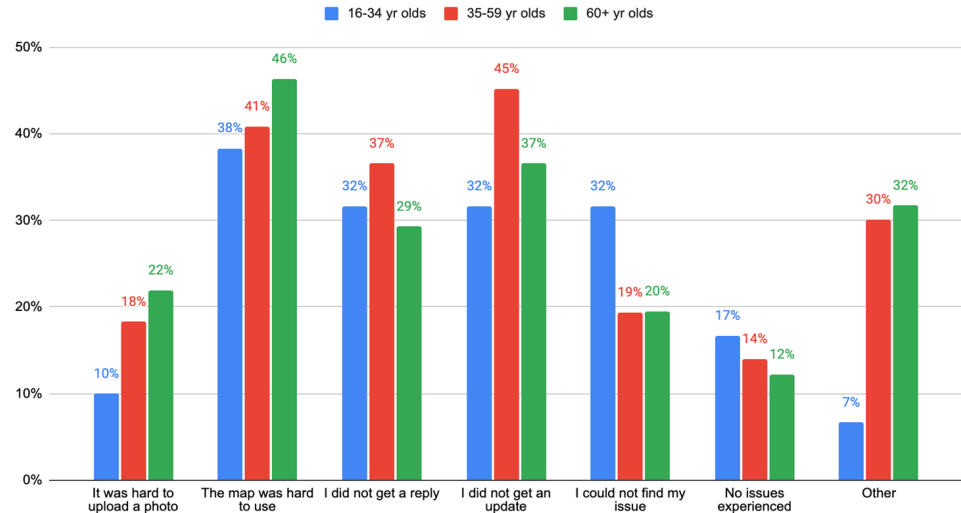
Q7. In the future, if you experienced an issue on the streets of Westminster and wanted to let the council know about it, what would you prefer to do?

64% of participants responded that they would prefer to report an issue online - via the website, an app or email.

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- **Report the issue via the Westminster Council website** — **26%**

  Report the issue on an app — 15%

  Email someone in the Council — 11%

  Email the council on a general email address — 11%

  Call the Council — 10%

  Speak to someone face to face at a Council or housing office — 9%
- Raise the issue with your local councillor — 6%
- Share the issue on social media — 2%
- Other (see next page) — 17%
  - Most answers were around improving Report it or an app

This is slightly skewed, as people most likely to respond to an online survey are more likely to be digitally confident. This survey does exclude those less likely to go online.

Q7. In the future, if you experienced an issue on the streets of Westminster and wanted to let the council know about it, what would you prefer to do?

Category	Value
Report the issue via the Westminster Council w…	107
Report the issue on an app	60
Email the council on a general email address	46
Email someone in the Council	45
Call the Council	41
Speak to someone face to face at a Council or…	35
Raise the issue with your local councillor	25
Share the issue on social media	9
Other	36

ZOOCHA

FAIRER WESTMINSTER | City of Westminster
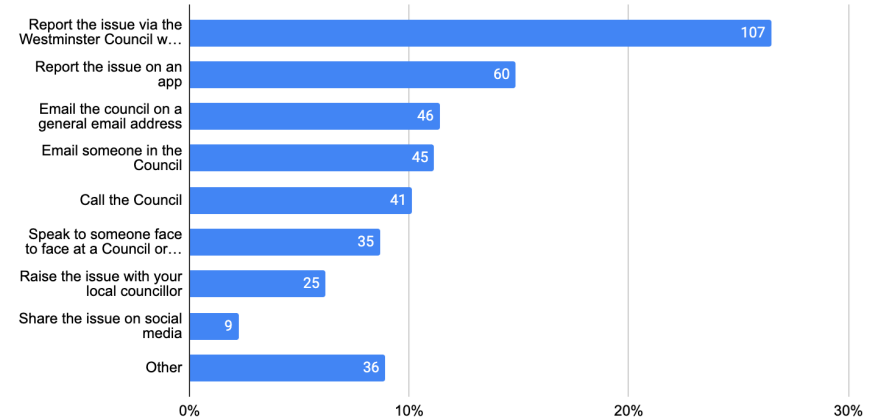
Q7. Other responses

Website / App / Report It

- Via the council website IF it is simple to use and one feels it will be responded to! Also it is easy to find on the site on which to report!
- Use the current report a problem page but it needs more categories. in particular economic migrant rough sleepers so border force (not shelter) can attend
- The most important thing is hearing what is being done to combat the issues! An app would be good to easily report issues and track where others have been reported for personal safety
- the app needs to be simplified, you register once, then just send the recording, photo or video
- Still use Report it
- App or website works for me
- or just improve Report it
- If Report It was better we wouldn't have to cc councillors all the time. I am sure it's not a great use of their time following up fly   -tipping.
- I'd use Report It for issues covered by report it, otherwise nothing
- I would like to report on a web app, the current set up is good in that you don't need to install an app and it works on old phones
- Anonymous report
- Deal with a human or report it on an app & receive an update until solved
- I would use REPORT IT in the first instance, but if the issue was not resolved, I would then contact our excellent local councillors in Hyde Park Ward

Social Media

- Social Media. All area MPs
- Send text via SMS or WhatsApp or Signal

In Person / Call

- I tell sometimes our area coordinator who is very helpful & she passes on to the relevant officer.
- I don't exactly need to speak to someone face to face, but it would be good to be able to speak directly to someone dedicated to solving the issues. I contrast this with the Noise Reporting line, which is staffed by people who are not involved in resolving the issues, and generally quite hostile to being asked to take down complaints.
- By speaking to someone you can have a Ref.No., contact etc.

Other

- All of those in which i can record accurately in writing for WCC record, and which can be referred back to, so action can be taken
- noise should be monitored electronically not just relying on residents to be woken up and report it

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Q7. In the future, if you experienced an issue on the streets of Westminster and wanted to let the council know about it, what would you prefer to do?

In all age groups, at least **64%** of participants responded that they would prefer to report an issue online- via the website, an app or email.

Participants from the **35-59 yr old group** had the highest response for reporting via the **Westminster Council website** (**33%** vs 22-26%), and also reporting via an **app** (21% vs 10-12%).

The other two groups were keen to report an issue via an email (either generic or to someone in the Council).

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 3 channels were:
- **Report the issue via the Westminster Council website**   **26%**
- **Email the council on a general email address**   **20%**
- Speak to someone face to face at a Council or housing office   15%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 3 channels were:
- **Report the issue via the Westminster Council website**   **33%**
- **Report the issue on an app**   **21%**
- Call the Council   10%

For **60+ yr olds**, the top 3 channels were:
- **Email someone in the Council**   **29%**
- **Report the issue via the Westminster Council website**   **22%**
- Other   15%

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Q7. In the future, if you experienced an issue on the streets of Westminster and wanted to let the council know about it, what would you prefer to do?

ZOOCHA
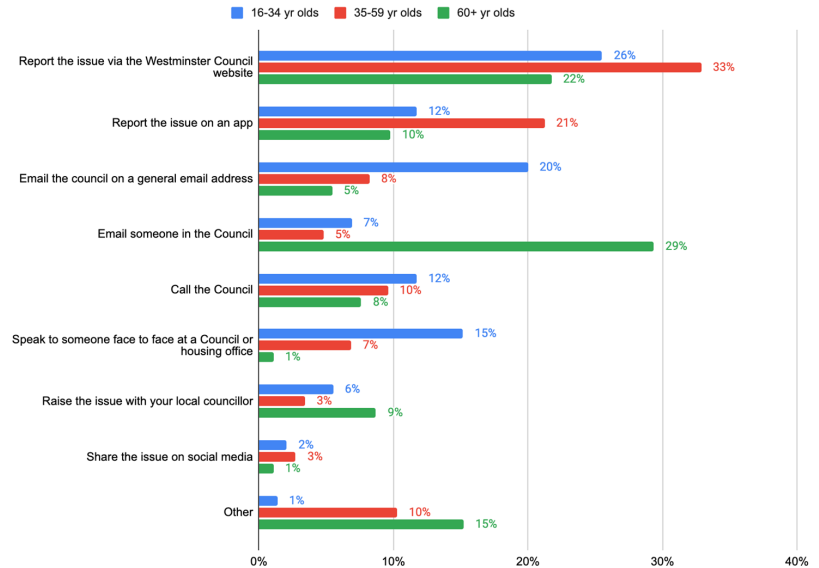
Q8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features?

The survey asked participants to rate 6 features in this question:

1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue
2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council
3. Being able to track the progress of my issue
4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to
5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue
6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue

With responses recorded on a scale of:

- Not important at all
- Somewhat unimportant
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Somewhat important
- Very important

ZOOCHA

Q8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features?

Overall, the participants rated all the features as important, with at least **78%** rating each feature either as Somewhat Important or Very Important.

The features that received the highest **Very Important ratings** were:

1. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to: **57%**
2. Being able to track the progress of my issue: **57%**
3. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue: **56%**
4. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue: **51%**

Q8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features? Responses of Very Important

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ZOOCHA
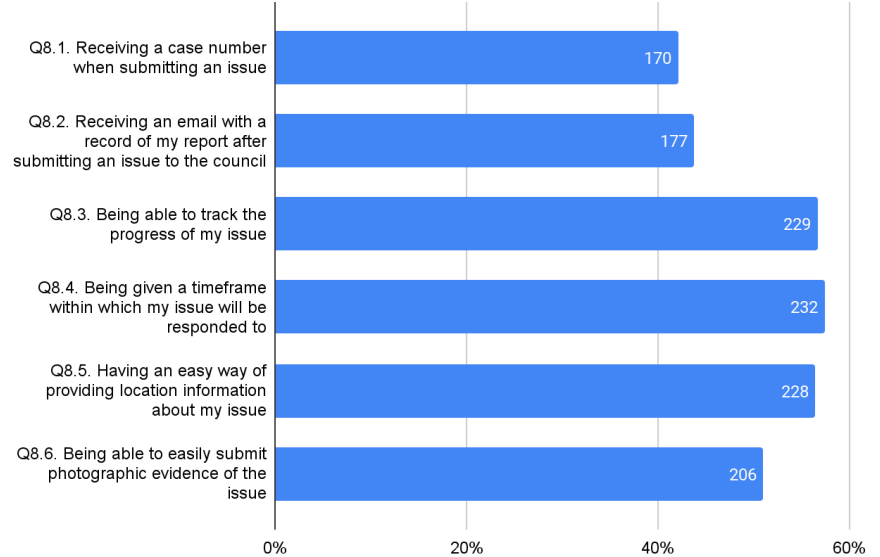
Q8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features?

Overall, the participants in all age groups rated all the features as important. The **ability to track the progress of an issue** was in the top two Very Important features across each age group.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the features with the most **Very Important** responses:
- Being given a timeframe — 51%
- Being able to track the progress — 43%

These two features had significantly higher Very Important responses than the other features within this age group.

For **35-59 yr olds**, the features with the most **Very Important** responses:
- Providing location information — 68%
- Being able to track the progress — 59%

Features on timeframes and submitting photographic evidence also received high Very Important responses within this age group.

For **60+ yr olds**, the features with the most **Very Important** responses:
- Providing location information — 77%
- Being able to track the progress — 73%

Within this age group, all features received at least 63% of responses as Very Important.

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Q8. Thinking about a new way of reporting street-related issues to the Council, how important are each of the following features? Responses of Very Important

Legend: 16-34 yr olds, 35-59 yr olds, 60+ yr olds

Q8.1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue — 30%, 40%, 63%

Q8.2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council — 28%, 40%, 70%

Q8.3. Being able to track the progress of my issue — 43%, 59%, 73%

Q8.4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to — 51%, 58%, 67%

Q8.5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue — 32%, 68%, 77%

Q8.6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue — 32%, 58%, 67%

ZOOCHA
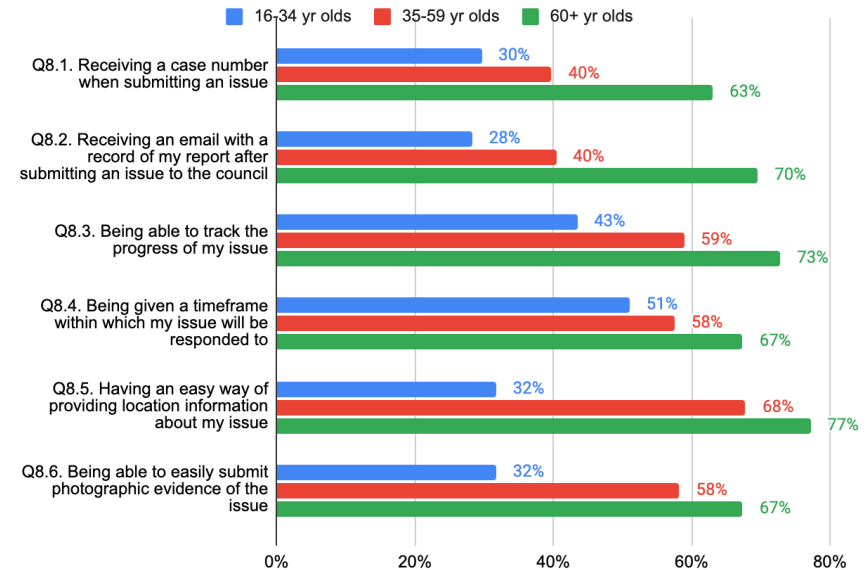
Q8.1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue

In total, **78%** of all participants responded that receiving a case number when submitting an issue was important with **42%** rating this as very important.

- No Response   1%
- Not important at all   3%
- Somewhat unimportant   6%
- Neither important nor unimportant   11%
- Somewhat important   36%
- **Very important**   **42%**

This feature was more important to the **60+ yr old group** with **63%** rating it as **very important** compared to 30-40% for the other two groups.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important   30%
- **Somewhat important**   **53%**

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important   40%
- Somewhat important   34%

For **60+ yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very important**   **63%**
- Somewhat Important   17%

Q8.1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue
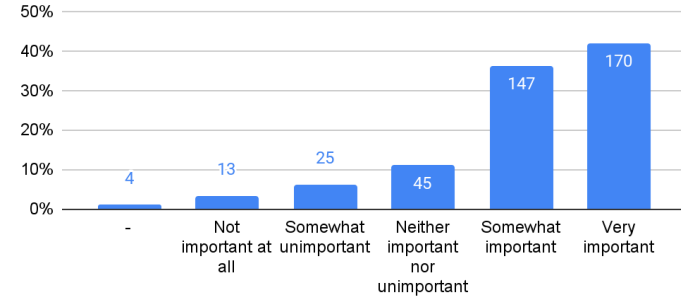
Q8.1. Receiving a case number when submitting an issue
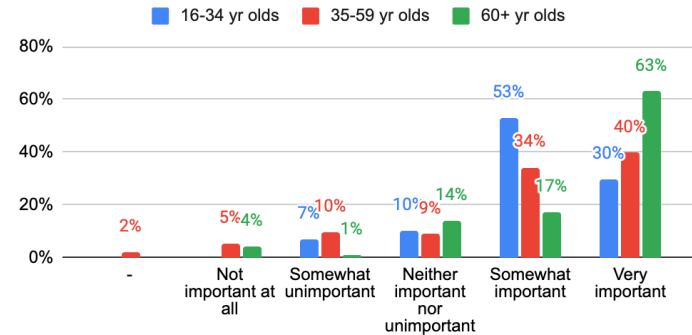
Q8.2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council

In total, **81%** of all participants responded that receiving an email with a record of their report after submitting an issue to the council was important, with **44%** rating this as very important.

- No Response — 1%
- Not important at all — 1%
- Somewhat unimportant — 5%
- Neither important nor unimportant — 12%
- Somewhat important — 37%
- **Very important** — **44%**

This feature was more important to the **60+ yr old group** with **70%** rating it as **very important** compared to 28-40% for the other two groups.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important — 28%
- **Somewhat important** — **50%**

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important — 40%
- Somewhat important — 38%

For **60+ yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very important** — **70%**
- Somewhat Important — 20%

Q8.2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council

Q8.2. Receiving an email with a record of my report after submitting an issue to the council

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ZOOCHA

Q8.3. Being able to track the progress of my issue

In total, **82%** of all participants responded that being able to track the progress of their issue was important, with **57%** rating this as very important.

- No Response   2%
- Not important at all   1%
- Somewhat unimportant   4%
- Neither important nor unimportant   11%
- Somewhat important   25%
- **Very important**   **57%**

This feature was more important to the **60+ yr old group** with **73%** rating it as **very important** compared to 40-59% for the other two groups.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very Important**   **43%**
- Somewhat important   32%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very Important**   **59%**
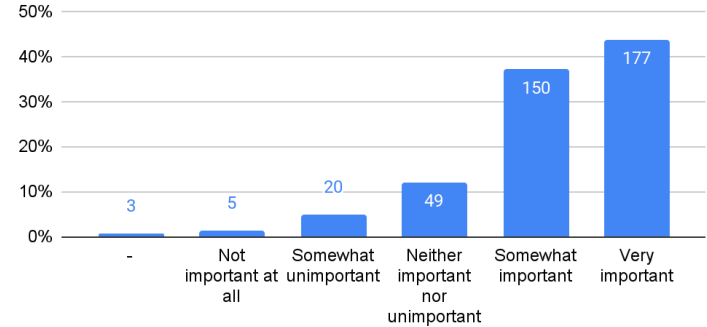- Somewhat important   26%

For **60+ yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very important**   **73%**
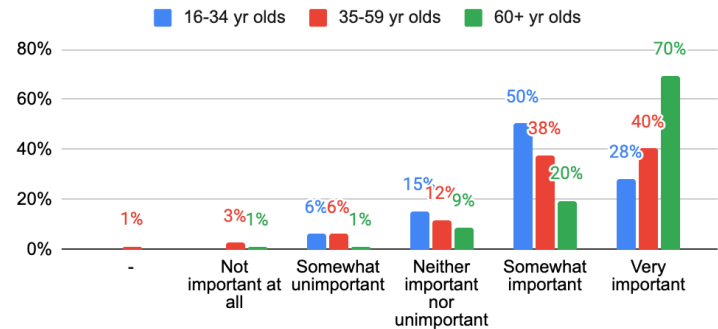- Somewhat Important   16%

Q8.3. Being able to track the progress of my issue

Q8.3. Being able to track the progress of my issue

Q8.4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to

In total, **83%** of all participants responded that being given a timeframe within which their issue will be responded to was important, with **57%** rating this as very important.

- No Response 1%
- Not important at all 0%
- Somewhat unimportant 5%
- Neither important nor unimportant 9%
- Somewhat important 26%
- **Very important** **57%**

This feature was more evenly important to all age groups, with **51-67%** of each group rating it as *very important*.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very Important** **51%**
- Somewhat important 28%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very Important** **58%**
- Somewhat important 27%

For **60+ yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- **Very important** **67%**
- Somewhat Important 25%

Q8.4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to
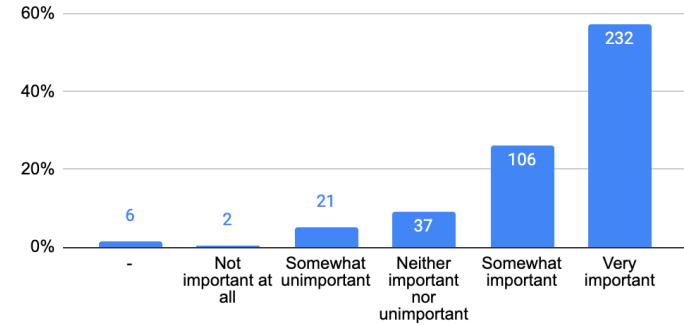
Q8.4. Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to

ZOOCHA
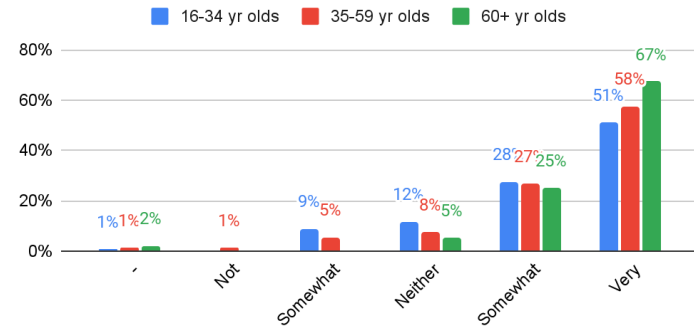
Q8.5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue

In total, **86%** of all participants responded that having an easy way of providing location information about their issue was important, with **56%** rating this as very important.

- No Response   1%
- Not important at all   0%
- Somewhat unimportant   3%
- Neither important nor unimportant   8%
- Somewhat important   30%
- Very important   56%

This feature was more important to the **35-59 yr old** and **60+ yr old group**   with **68%** and **73%** rating it as **very important**   respectively, compared to only 32% for the 16-34 yr old group.

For **16-34 yr olds**   , the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important   32%
- Somewhat important   45%

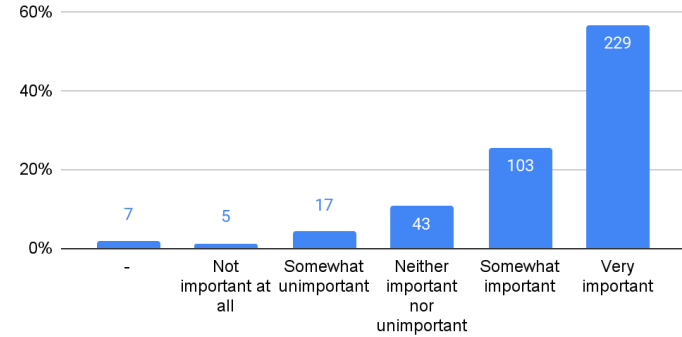For **35-59 yr olds**   , the top 2 responses were:
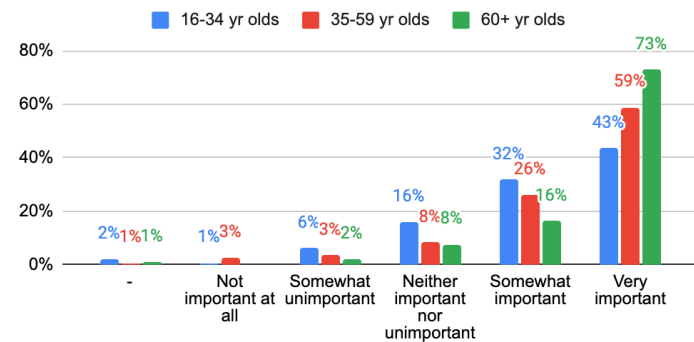- Very Important   68%
- Somewhat important   23%

For **60+ yr olds**   , the top 2 responses were:
- Very important   77%
- Somewhat Important   18%

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Q8.5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue

Q8.5. Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue
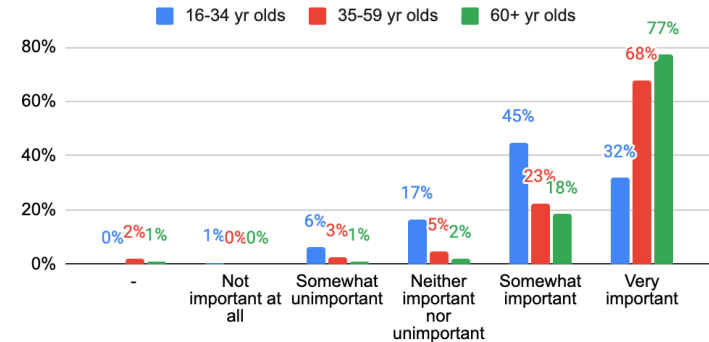
Q8.6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue

In total, **83%** of all participants responded that being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue was important, with **51%** rating this as very important.

- No Response — 1%
- Not important at all — 1%
- Somewhat unimportant — 4%
- Neither important nor unimportant — 10%
- Somewhat important — 32%
- Very important — 51%

This feature was more important to the **35-59 yr old** and **60+ yr old group** with **58%** and **67%** rating it as **very important** respectively, compared to only 32% for the 16-34 yr old group.

For **16-34 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important — 32%
- Somewhat important — 46%

For **35-59 yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very Important — 58%
- Somewhat important — 28%
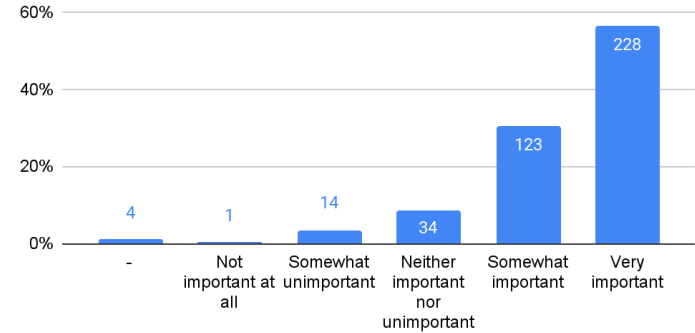
For **60+ yr olds**, the top 2 responses were:
- Very important — 67%
- Somewhat Important — 18%

Q8.6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue
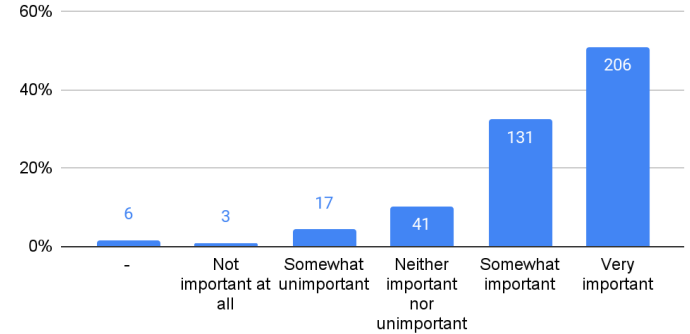
Q8.6. Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue
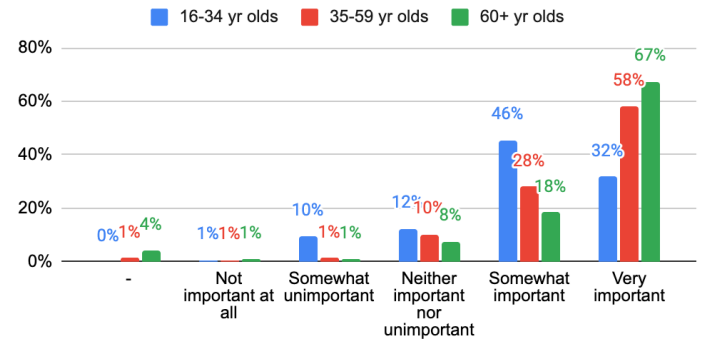
Q11. What one thing should Westminster Council focus on to improve the experience of reporting issues?

The participants responses match those highlighted as the Very Important in Q8, **Being able to track the progress of my issue** and **Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to:**

Being able to track the progress of my issue	**34%**
Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to	**21%**
Receiving an email summarising my issue after submission	11%
Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue	8%
Receiving a email from the council which refers to the issues mentioned by me	6%
• Receiving a case number when submitting an issue	5%
• Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue	3%
• Other (see next page)	12%

Q11. What one thing should Westminster Council focus on to improve the experience of reporting issues?

Being able to track the progress of my issue	139
Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to	85
Receiving an email summarising my issue after submission	43
Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue	34
Receiving a email from the council which refers to the issues mentioned by me	24
Receiving a case number when submitting an issue	19
Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue	11
Other	49

ZOOCHA

Q11. Other responses

The app option, must not be as it is now, which is just a link to the bad website. It must be an app that allows a photo to be taken on app, which has the location within the photo and the option for a few words in a free text box, to do when you are out and about.

Ability to report accurately in my own words by email to central address, with acknowledgement it has been received.

Having appropriate tick boxes for the issues businesses in the Borough

Receiving a response telling me what has been done & when its likely to be solved, by a human not automated.

A person to speak to

Council pushes updates of issue to me via method of my choosing. Default

More choices of what I can report

Function for reporting low-level but cumulatively problematic ASB

The design of the mobile Report It platform makes it sometimes confusing or impossible to report.

Getting an information the file was 'successfully' closed

Giving a name and job title and email, at least of a specific department, of who will be dealing with it.

Having a way of reporting issues that are not happening right now

Provide a way to report building works problems

Report resulting action from my complaint; a case officer and a case number to be included

Making it possible to start by expressing the problem in free text.

Immediate response

Proper follow up

Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue

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ZOOCHA

FAIRER WESTMINSTER | City of Westminster

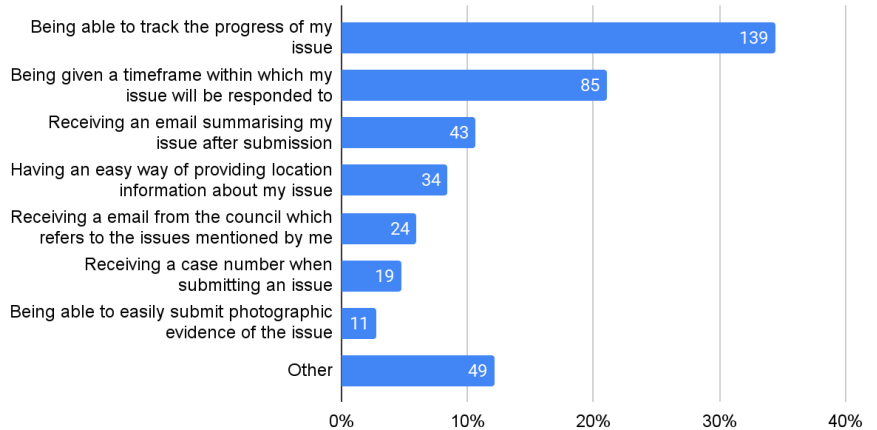# Q11. What one thing should Westminster Council focus on to improve the experience of reporting issues?

The participants responses match those highlighted as the Very Important in Q8, Being able to track the progress of my issue and Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to:

For **16-34 yr olds** , the top 2 responses were:
- Being able to track the progress of my issue — 37%
- Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to — 33%

For **35-59 yr olds** , the top 2 responses were:
- Being able to track the progress of my issue — 36%
- Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to — 18%

For **60+ yr olds** , the top 2 responses were:
- Being able to track the progress of my issue — 34%
- Other (see next page) — 18%

Q11. What one thing should Westminster Council focus on to improve the experience of reporting issues?

■ 16-34 yr olds ■ 35-59 yr olds ■ 60+ yr olds

Being able to track the progress of my issue: 37%, 36%, 27%

Being given a timeframe within which my issue will be responded to: 33%, 18%, 10%

Receiving an email summarising my issue after submission: 13%, 8%, 11%

Having an easy way of providing location information about my issue: 6%, 12%, 8%

Receiving a email from the council which refers to the issues mentioned by me: 1%, 4%, 14%

Receiving a case number when submitting an issue: 3%, 4%, 8%

Being able to easily submit photographic evidence of the issue: 3%, 1%, 4%

Other: 3%, 16%, 18%

ZOOCHA

Expectations

ZOOCHA

Q9. Would you like the option of being able to report issues anonymously?

In total, **78.5%** of all participants responded that being able to report issues anonymously is a desirable option.

This was a more important issue to the **16-34 yr olds** and **35 - 59 yr olds** with **85%** and **81%** of participants responding **Yes** respectively, compared to only 61% of 60+ yr olds.

For 16-34 yr olds :

Yes	**85%**
No	15%

For **35 - 59 yr olds** :

Yes	**81%**
No	19%

For **60+ yr olds** :

Yes	**61%**
No	39%

Q9. Would you like the option of being able to report issues anonymously?
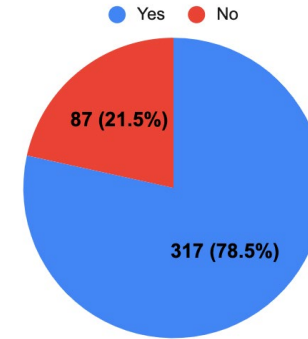
- Yes
- No

87 (21.5%)

317 (78.5%)

Q9. Would you like the option of being able to report issues anonymously?

- 16-34 yr olds
- 35-59 yr olds
- 60+ yr olds

ZOOCHA
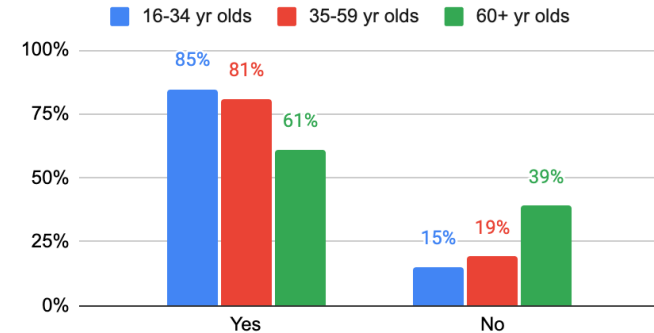
Q10. After reporting your issue, how long do you expect it would take to be reviewed and for you to get a response back?

In total, **60%** of all participants responded that they expect to get a response back within an day of reporting the problem. However, it is unclear from this survey what their expected response is- within a few hours may seem fast, but that could be their expectation of an acknowledgement email, even if nothing has yet happened to their report.

Within an hour	12%
Within a few hours	21%
Within a day or less	27%
2-3 days	27%
Within a week	11%
Within 2 weeks	3%
More than a month	0%
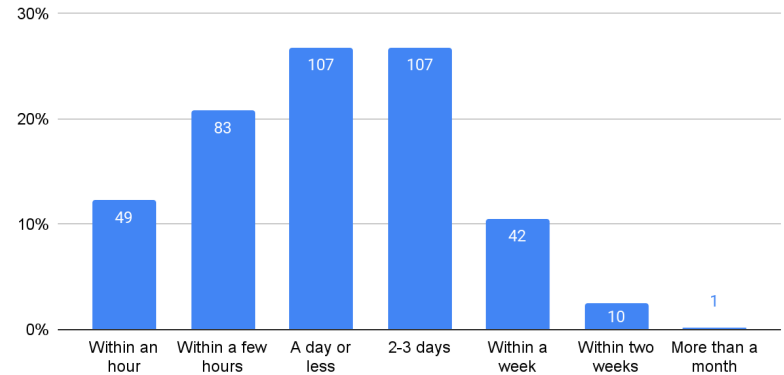
Q10. After reporting your issue, how long do you expect it would take to be reviewed and for you to get a response back?

For **35-59 yr olds (62%) and 60+ yr olds (70%**) there was a higher response amongst participants for receiving a response back **within an day** of reporting the problem. For 16-24 yr olds this was lower at 48%, with 32% expecting a response with 2-3 days.

For **16-34 yr olds** :

Within an hour / few hours	21%
A day or less	27%
2-3 days	32%
4 days +	20%

For **35-59 yr olds** :

Within an hour / few hours	44%
A day or less	26%
2-3 days	21%
4 days +	10%

For **60+ yr olds** :

Within an hour / few hours	32%
A day or less	30%
2-3 days	28%
4 days +	10%

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Q10. After reporting your issue, how long do you expect it would take to be reviewed and for you to get a response back?
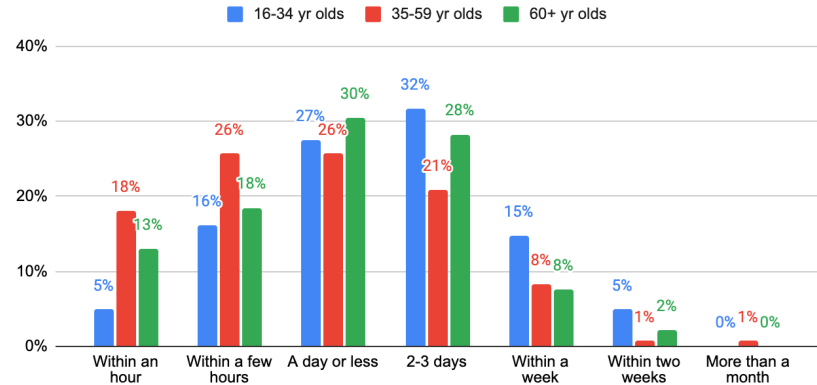
ZOOCHA

Appendix – Full Ethnic Breakdown of Participants

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City of Westminster

To which of the following groups do you consider you belong?

This question allowed participants to self identify using their own words. Whilst we grouped the responses for the purpose of the report, the following chart shows the full breakdown of responses.

Appendix B - Webpage Mock up (Draft)

Report It Review

Residents | Business | My account | Search

Home > Report It Review

Welcome to the Report It Review page

Report it is how residents and businesses can report street-based issues to the council.

In October 2022 Westminster City Council established a team to transform Report it into an exemplar service for managing street-based issues.

The team has been reviewing how the service can better meet the needs of our residents, businesses, partners, and council staff. Including people in how we develop Report it for the future is a key part of our Fairer Westminster strategy.

The Report It team has created this page to keep you up to date with our review of this service. [GW1]

We need more of a story here, referencing the Fairer Westminster Strategy, why we were set up and what we're hoping to achieve. Then go into: On this page the team will post updates on... (and an overview) [GW1]

Current activities

The team has recently shared the research findings (add date of meeting and link to slidepack) with our residents, staff and partners to ensure we are focussing on the right problems. Following this, we are currently working on a plan for how we can make reporting in Westminster a little easier in the short term and how we can meet our longer term ambitions.

We have a mailing list for progress and updates with our work on the Report It service. If you would like to be added to our mailing list, please email: Reportitreviewteam@westminster.gov.uk

What we are trying to achieve

We want to deliver an exceptional service for our communities to report their problems, one that embraces a great digital experience as well as the human touch from our staff and partners.

This means listening to, understanding, and responding to the needs of our residents, businesses, and partners to continuously develop our people and digital services.

Recent activities and improvements

In October, we started to research the needs of our residents and businesses as well as those of council staff, councillors, and partners. We identified several areas for improvement including:

1. Making the experience easier and faster for anyone reporting an issue
2. Capturing the right information so that we can successfully resolve the issue
3. Ensuring anyone can receive updates and feedback on their issue
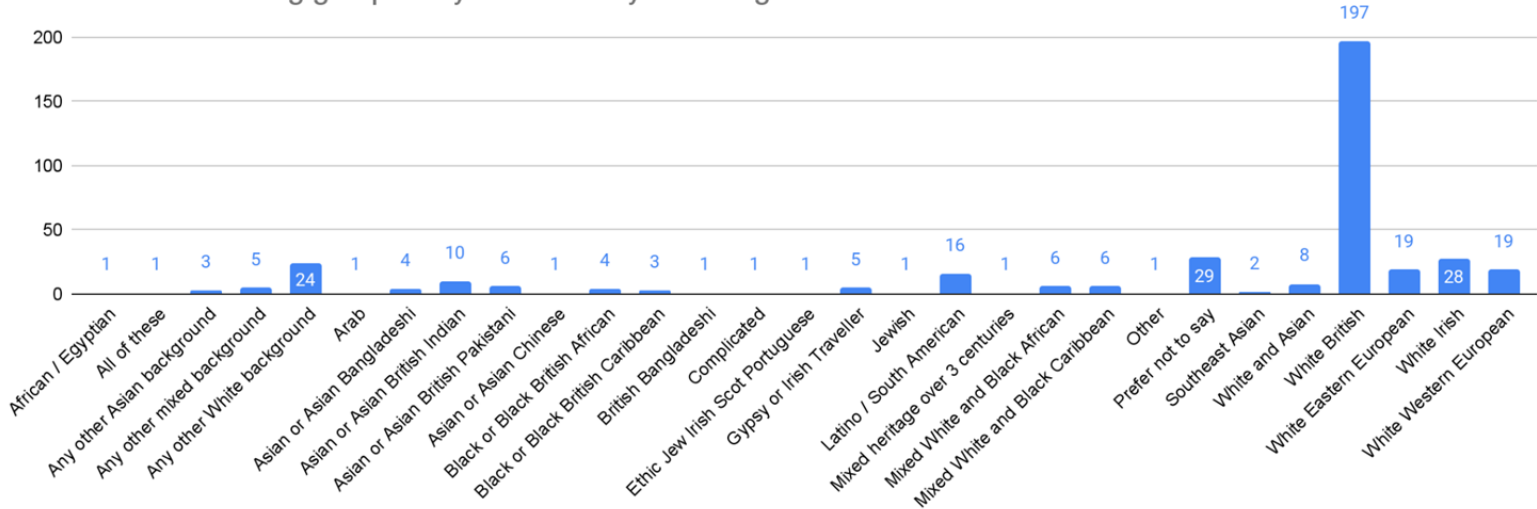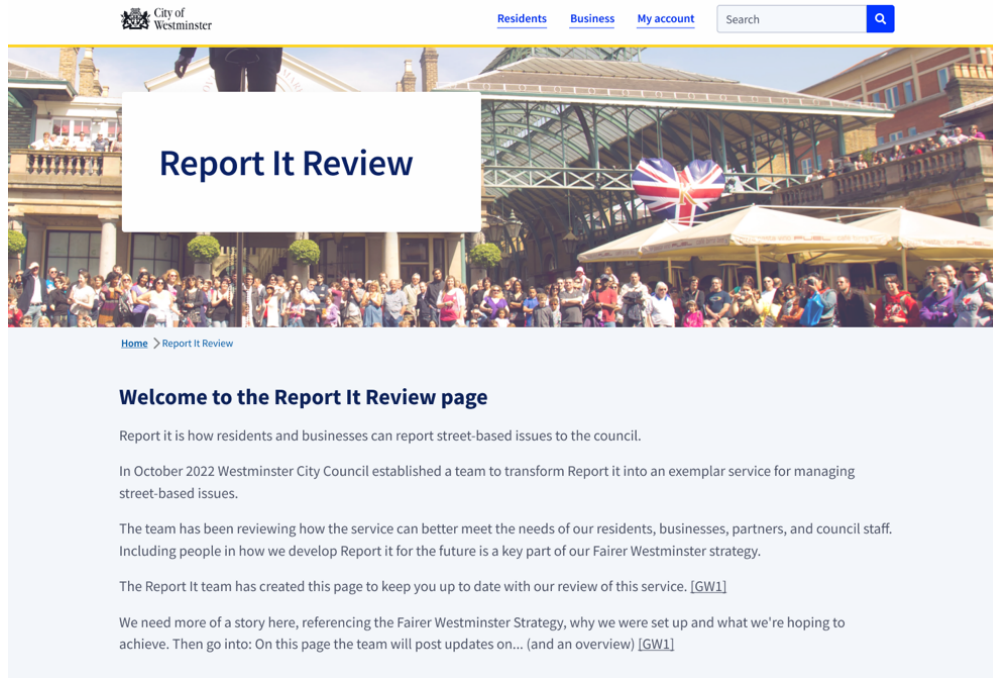4. Using technology to free up our staff to focus on the human touch
5. Using data to improve how we predict and prevent issues

Our aim is to make valuable improvements, whenever we can. For example, we have recently improved the online map which has made it easier for residents to find the location of their issue when reporting.

Report It Events

Come in and test our products
Have your say on our services by Friday 17 July 2023

Playback sessions
Attend our playbacks to see the improvements we've made to Report It!

Public Show and Tells
You'll get to see the impact of Report it across Westminster

Is this page useful? Yes No   Is there anything wrong with this page?

All council services
News
Events
Jobs
Contact us
Visit us in-person

City of Westminster

Accessibility Cookies Data protection Freedom of information Gender pay gap Help Modern slavery Terms & conditions

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![City of Westminster]

Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	4th May 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	**2023/2024 Work Programme**
Report of:	Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison
Cabinet Member Portfolios:	Finance and Council Reform and Planning and Economic Development
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	**Francis Dwan** **fdwan@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 2023/2024 work programme. The proposals set out in Appendix 2 have been developed in consultation with senior officers as well as members of the Executive (Cabinet) on their plans for the year ahead to ensure scrutiny is focused on those areas where it may have most impact.

2.   Meeting Dates for the 2023/2024 Municipal Year

2.1   The Committee is advised that the scheduled meeting dates for the 2023/2024 year are:

- Wednesday 7th June 2023;
- Thursday 20th July 2023;
- Tuesday 26th September 2023;
- Tuesday 12th December 2023;
- Monday 4th March 2024; and
- Thursday 2nd May 2024.

3. Background

3.1   Since January, the Policy and Scrutiny team has been supporting the Chair to consider the work programme for the next municipal year. The process for this included; consultation with the Cabinet Members, consultation with Executive Directors and relevant Heads of Service, following up on previous items and commitments from previous meetings, consideration of forward plans in the Cabinet Portfolios and challenges identified across the Directorates.

3.2   The aim of this process has been to culminate in a work programme which:

- Focuses on what is important;
- Focuses on areas where performance might be improved;
- Focuses on services which are important to residents;
- Focuses on where scrutiny can make a difference and add value;
- Proactively feeds into policy development by contributing to pre-tender considerations or strategy development for example; and
- Uses the insight of backbench Members to act as critical friend to services of the City Council and our partners thereby enabling good governance and excellent services.

4. Draft Work Programme for 2023/24

4.1   The Committee is asked to consider the draft work programme for the next municipal year, 2023/2024, set out in Appendix 2. The Committee is requested to discuss the proposed topics listed as well as provide comments and suggestions.

4.2   When considering the work programme, and agreeing an overall programme of scrutiny activity, the Committee should have regard to whether the work programme is achievable in terms of both Officer and Member time, taking into account that the Committee is scheduled to meet six times per year. Members are also reminded that it is advisable to hold some capacity in reserve for any urgent issues that might arise.

4.3   Each Committee has discretion to establish Task Groups to examine key issues in more detail and also to commission Single Member Studies. The Committee is asked to consider whether they would like to establish a Task Group or commission a Single Member Study. The Committee should be advised that both Members and Officers will only be able to successfully take part in and support a finite number of Task Groups at any one time.

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

fdwan@westminster.gov.uk

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

FINANCE, PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

COMPOSITION

Seven (7) Members of the Council (four (4) Majority Party Members and three (3) Opposition Party Members).

TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) To carry out the Policy and Scrutiny functions, as set out in Chapter 4 of the Constitution in respect of matters relating to all those duties within the terms of reference of the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform.

(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 paragraphs 18.2 and 18.3 as well as section 19 of Chapter 4 of the Constitution.

(c) Matters, within the broad remit of the Cabinet Members referred to in (a) above which are the responsibility of external agencies.

(d) Any other matter allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.

(e) To have the power to establish ad hoc or Standing Sub-Committees as Task Groups to carry out the Scrutiny of functions within these terms of reference.

(f) To scrutinise the duties of the Lead Members which fall within the remit of the Committee or as otherwise allocated by the Westminster Scrutiny Commission.

(g) To scrutinise any Bi-borough proposals which impact on service areas that fall within the Committee's terms of reference

(h) To oversee any issues relating to Performance that fall within the Committee's terms of reference.

(i) To have the power to scrutinise those partner organisations that are relevant to the remit of the Committee.

(j) To consider any Councillor Calls for Action referred by a Ward Member to the Committee.

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Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023/24

ROUND 1 7th June 2023		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Pop-Up Programme	To receive an overview of the success of the first two stages of the programme that have now been completed. As well as a look at the third phase which is set to commence.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Responsible Procurement Strategy	To consider the responsible procurement strategy following its launch in April 2023, reviewing the plans for its implementation over the medium to longer term and understand and how it feeds into the Fairer Westminster Delivery Plan.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 2 20th July 2023		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing

Agenda item	Purpose	Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Discussion Item – Budget Scrutiny Task Group	To review the impact of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group in February 2023 and how this can be improved.	Discussion piece led by Cllr Paul Fisher – Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Task Group
Participatory Budgeting	To review proposals to adopt participatory budgeting and involving communities in decision making on how money is spent.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Business Improvement Districts - BIDs	To receive an overview of BIDs in Westminster. To better understand how they work, their processes and how the Council interacts with them. As part of this, the Committee will also receive a case-study of a joint working scheme with a BID, in order to review how, if at all, the Council can better work with the BIDs.	Cllr Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 3 26th September 2023		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources

Oxford Street Programme	To review the Oxford Street Programme and proposals for its future following publication of the business case and further information on the Programme's costs.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Bernie Flaherty, Deputy Chief Executive Westminster City Council
London Living Wage and Third-Party Contracts	To review the progress made in implementing the Council becoming a Living Wage accredited organisation in respect of its employees and suppliers and the impacts arising from this.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 4 12th December 2023		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Lessons learnt from insourcing	To review lessons learnt from insourcing, using contact centres as a case study, twelve months on from them being brought back in-house.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Economic Development Plan	To review proposals for the Economic Development Plan.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 5 4th March 2024		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Place-Shaping Schemes	To review place-shaping schemes of note in Westminster.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Planning Policy Changes and City Plan Review	To review proposed changes to planning policy and how this ties in with the City Plan review.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Pedro Wrobel, Executive Director of Innovation and Change Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

ROUND 6 2nd May 2024		
Agenda item	**Purpose**	**Responsible Cabinet Member and Executive Director**
Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing

Cabinet Member Q&A	To update the Committee on key areas of work within its remit and the Cabinet Member's priorities.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Westminster Employment Services	To review the outputs of the Westminster employment services.	Councillor Geoff Barraclough, Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development Debbie Jackson, Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing
Corporate Property Portfolio	To receive a report on the Corporate Property Portfolio with regards either the operational estate or the commercial investment property portfolio.	Councillor David Boothroyd, Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director for Finance and Resources
Work programme	To review the work programme considering recent events and discussions.	n/a – Francis Dwan, Policy and Scrutiny Advisor

Unallocated Items
(N.B these will be considered as substitutes, should the situation merit it. They can also be used for consideration by the Committee, though other options not listed may also be presented or considered):

Westminster Works 2024	To review the Westminster Works Programme.
IT disaggregation	To review the ongoing process of disaggregation of IT services from shared-service and review the costs/savings realised.
Planning Obligations and Affordable Housing SPD	To review planning obligations and the affordable housing SPD before the decision is taken in July 2023.
Council Tax Collection	To review the Westminster's rate of council tax collection, what efforts are in place to improve it and to support vulnerable residents.
Understanding major planning applications fall is being addressed – efficiency savings	To review the Council's efforts in attracting appropriate infrastructure investment in the form of major planning applications following a lull in the volume of applications.
Preserving world heritage status	To review the Council's efforts to sustain Westminster's world heritage status.
Review of Westminster Investment Service	To review the Westminster Investment Service.
Evening and Night-Time Economy	To review the Council's work on facilitating Westminster's night-time economy whilst ensuring safety and respect to both visitors and residents.

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Appendix 3 - ACTION TRACKER
Finance, Planning and Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

	ROUND 5 9th March 2023	
Agenda Item	Action	Status/Follow Up
Update from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Economic Development	Given the level of vacated properties, particularly on high streets, what are the projections for what can be achieved by pop-ups, are they likely to lead to long-term improvements to high streets and (small) businesses?	Awaiting Response
	Members suggested that pop-ups, enterprise spaces and employment schemes required more promotion, to improve their reach and achieve the positive outcomes they are capable of delivering	Noted by the Cabinet Member and Officers present. No response received/necessary
Update from the Cabinet Member for Finance and Council Reform	The Cabinet Member, through the revenues and benefits team, was asked to provide a greater in depth explanation as to contributing factors that explain the Council Tax collection 'gap'. Members also requested more detail on how this shortfall is being addressed.	This is provided in the Cabinet Member update for May's Committee. The Cabinet Member will take any questions on the information provided.
Oxford Street Programme	To bring back the Oxford Street Programme when a clearer picture of funding is available and the business case has been completed and can be brought to the Committee.	This has been added to the Work Programme for 2023/24 on 26th September 2023.

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