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Title:	Engagement with Partners
Report of:	Executive Director of Policy, Performance and Communications
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Leader of the Council
Wards Involved:	All
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Effective partnership working between Westminster City Council and other organisations is critical to the successful delivery of *City for All*, our corporate strategy.
- 1.2 This report outlines some of the key relationships necessary to deliver that strategy. It highlights some of the benefits and challenges of effective partnership working, and how we are attempting to mitigate some of those challenges.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- Is the Council engaging with partners successfully to deliver *City for All*?
- Could the Council engage with partners differently to deliver better outcomes for residents?
- Are there any partners the council should be engaging with more?

3. Background

3.1 Westminster City Council believes in creating a City for All where people are:

- born into a supportive and safe environment;
- grow and learn throughout their lives;
- build fantastic careers in world-leading industries;
- have access to high quality, affordable homes;
- enjoy retirement with dignity and pride.

3.2 Our approach to realising these ambitions is based on achieving success in five distinct areas. We want Westminster to be a:

- City of opportunity
- City that offers excellent local services
- Caring and fairer city
- Healthier and greener city
- City that celebrate its communities

3.3 However, the Council recognises that it cannot deliver a City for All alone. Other organisations, particularly those operating in the Voluntary and Community Sector, often have better 'reach' into specific communities, with a high degree of trust and a highly developed understanding of specific priorities and concerns. Other organisations have levers (e.g. central Government) and powers (e.g. the Metropolitan Police) that we need to consider as we deliver our *City for All* pledges.

3.4 That is why the overarching theme of City for All is working jointly with partners and residents to deliver the vision. These partners operate at national, regional and local levels: central Government; the GLA; other London Boroughs; housing associations; local businesses; voluntary and community organisations. All have a role to play.

How we engage varies. For example:

- We directly commission services (from providers within adult social care, public health and children's services).
- We liaise and strategically plan (with the Met Police through the Community Safety Partnership and Serious Violence Task Group)
- We fund and employ service level agreements (for example, with the Abbey Community Centre)
- Engagement structures and networks, such as London Councils, are also key; as is,
- Engagement with residents, whether that be through Ward Councillors, amenity societies, the Open Forum or other means; all are essential to deliver a City for All.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 This report outlines the Council's approach to partnership working and how we are delivering on our priorities. The report highlights several key *City for All* pledges, with case studies showing how we are working with partners to achieve them.
- 4.2 This report then also draws out overarching themes of partnership working and acknowledges the benefits and challenges of this approach for our residents and stakeholders.
- 4.3 'Lobbying' or deciding who are the influential and important stakeholders that we need to engage with in pursuit of the objectives detailed in City For All, should be a pre-requisite in any project initiation document.
- 4.4 Inevitably the focus of stakeholder engagement may change as more information comes to light. For example, in our work on fair funding, it became clear after initial officer discussions with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) officials, that we should be directing the majority of our efforts at HM Treasury Officials, who, through fiscal event planning and development, would ultimately be key to the success or otherwise of our proposals in this area.
- 4.5 This approach doesn't mean that we neglect engagement with MHCLG Officials. Treasury Officials will want to know their views on our proposals so it is important that we keep them informed, on-side and supportive.

5. Working with our partners to deliver a City for All

5.1 City of opportunity

- 5.1.1 To deliver our ambitious house building programme the council works with partners from across the housebuilding sector, including developers. These partners contribute to the Council's target of 1,850 homes by bringing investment in to the city. They also provide 'housing plus' services such as employment support.
- 5.1.2 We engage with these partners through formal means such as nominations agreements with housing associations. We also convene informal groups such as the Housing Association Chief Executives Group which we use to discuss challenges across the city. The connections have helped us deliver successful schemes for our residents such as the mortgage accelerator scheme developed with Dolphin Living.
- 5.1.3 Several public sector organisations are responsible for delivering services in Westminster that meet *City for All* priorities. The GLA, for example, are the devolved body for adult skills funding. They are also co-commissioners (with Central London Forward and London Boroughs) of employment and skills provision. To deliver the City Skills Framework, we are engaging with the GLA on their work developing the London Local Industrial Strategy and Skills and

Employment Vision. This is to ensure it serves Westminster's residents. We co-ordinate this with our engagement through London Councils to ensure Westminster's voice is heard.

5.2 Caring and fairer city

5.2.1 One of the key forums that the Council convenes is the Safer Westminster Partnership¹. The partnership has several statutory duties, including:

- producing yearly Strategic Assessments and partnership plans
- sharing information via the Information Sharing Protocol
- annual progress reports
- implementing a strategy to reduce reoffending
- conducting Domestic Homicide Reviews

5.2.2 The Council has also put in place other arrangements to make sure we are working closely with these partners, such as:

- Partners regularly attend meetings including our Serious Violence Task group and Cabinet Member briefings
- The Met Police provide dedicated officers within the Council's Integrated Street Engagement Unit

5.3 Healthier and greener city

5.3.1 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) within the NHS are our partner in delivering our holistic Dementia Strategy. As a commissioner of community care, CCGs are in a strong position to support our work to transform the lives of people with dementia, their carers, families and friends. And because CCGs commission health services, they are critical to our work to better integrate the health and care system.

5.4 City that celebrates its communities

5.4.1 The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) plays an important role in delivering *City for All* priorities. One way we enable this is by directly commissioning VCS services. For example, One Westminster, Groundwork and Tempo are our volunteering-services providers, responsible for recruiting volunteers, organising and coordinating volunteering activities, promoting volunteering and rewarding volunteers through time-credits scheme.

5.4.2 We also work with other leaders in the VCS field that operate in the city (e.g. Cardinal Hulme Centre). These are partners that we do not directly commission, but they help deliver *City for All* priorities through joint work, and we facilitate their activities by helping them access funding opportunities and involving them in the communications activity and community engagement.

¹ The Partnership includes the Metropolitan Police Service; Mayor's Office for Policing & Crime (MOPAC); London Fire Brigade; Central London Commissioning Group; National Probation Service and the London Community Rehabilitation Company (MTC Novo)

6. Challenges

6.1 The key challenge to effective partnership working is resources within the public sector. But this also means we need to redouble our efforts in relation to engaging with partners because, in a world of constrained resource, working together to achieve shared goals is critical.

6.2 But effective partnership working to achieve goals through others also demands effective information sharing. Achieving this has been another challenge.

6.3 Resources

6.3.1 Within the Metropolitan Police, the decision to turn the 32 policing boroughs, (aligned to individual London Boroughs), into 12 Basic Command Units (BCU), resulted in a reduction of 243 officers across the WCC, RBKC, LBHF areas, and neighbourhood policing would have seen 225 fewer officers. However, successful engagement from WCC has resulted in this resource being increased. But there continues to be a significant shortage - meaning a Police focus on higher harm/criminal activity, and activity addressing key issues for our residents - such as ASB - is not prioritised.

6.3.2 Clinical Commissioning Groups in the NHS are also facing significant resource pressures – this has impacted on our ability to progress the integration agenda.

6.3.3 Similarly, we here at WCC are subject to resource constraints. Commissioning procedures and relationships have necessarily become stringent and more outcome-focused.

6.4 Understanding each other's priorities

6.4.1 Working with developers to help meet our affordable housing targets within the aspirations of our City Plan takes open and transparent understanding of each other's priorities at an early stage through an effective planning process.

6.4.2 Understanding business needs and managing growth that is appropriate to the City and our residents requires effective engagement at many different levels.

6.4.3 Information sharing between WCC, the Met and other Police Services could be better. It hampers our ability to effectively tackle issues such as Modern Slavery and County Lines, and effectively safeguard those being exploited when they are moved into/out of our borough.

6.5 Engagement 'fatigue'

6.5.1 There may be an issue of over engagement with businesses and cultural organisations. An individual business within London may be approached by a number of public sector organisations and for a number of reasons. And a single organisation may even have multiple approaches from the same public sector body – including WCC. The Zoological Society of London for example

has multiple contacts with, and requests from, different teams within the Council.

7. How are we overcoming those challenges?

7.1 Ultimately our strategic aspiration should be the development of a comprehensive stakeholder engagement strategy, identifying key partners and their level of interest and influence; allocating stakeholder relationship managers and bringing more rigour and uniformity to our current ad-hoc engagement.

7.2 In the interim, we are addressing these challenges in the following ways:

7.2.1 Coordinating our message

7.2.3 For example, CLF requested examples of good practice to support the development of the London Industrial Strategy. WCC co-ordinated across departments to collect examples of 'good growth' – these were all published as part of CLF's response to the GLA. This type of approach could be usefully expanded to address the issue of engagement fatigue amongst our partners.

7.3 Making the most of our resources

7.3.1 For example, our work on the development of the Strategic Investment Pot, through upping our engagement with CLF, providing more input and structure to the relationship, meant we managed to put together a draft bid team of six boroughs – this will provide us with much more traction than the last SIP bidding round. Building similar 'coalitions of the willing' needs to be considered more extensively in the future to help deliver on our objectives.

7.3.2 Although the CCGs have been clear there is no additional funding for Dementia/Autism initiatives, there is good partnership working ongoing to develop and deliver the dementia and autism strategies.

7.4 Improving our engagement

7.4.1 Regular engagement is key. It helps each organisation understand the priorities and challenges of others and is critical to the creation and maintenance of effective working relationships. Engagement at the right level is also important – for example with Members and the Chief Executive.

7.4.2 By way of a practical example, markets was a challenging policy area for WCC a couple of years ago, with complaints from traders and a consequent risk to the council's reputation. We worked with traders to develop a markets strategy, to understand what they want our role to be, and what markets should look like in the future. The strategy and consultation process were successful and has de-risked the area of markets for the council, and turned it into positive engagement.

- 7.4.3 Similarly, we engage effectively with the Westminster Property Association. Formally through consultation on the City Plan, but also supported by regular meetings outside of such events. For example, we underwent an extensive engagement exercise to reach a common ground on the revision to the mixed-use policy on the Plan.
- 7.4.4 With specific reference to the issue of 'engagement fatigue' referred to above, Officers working with specific stakeholders will need to be aware through engagement with colleagues within WCC of any other teams with an interest in engaging with specific stakeholder organisations. And cross-cutting WCC functions, like Communications, are well placed to identify and highlight any synergies or overlaps between WCC departments and stakeholders. Again this may be a function of any project initiation document – identifying other areas within the Council that have a need to engage with a specific organisation.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Lucy Hoyte x8532

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