



City of Westminster

Committee Report

Meeting or Decision Maker:	Westminster Scrutiny Commission
Date:	20 July 2022
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Annual Scrutiny Work Programme
Wards Affected:	All
Financial Summary:	There are no financial implications arising from this report, but additional work may incur financial costs which may be discussed at committee and on the advice of officers.
Report of:	Richard Cressey, Head of Governance and Councillor Liaison

1. Executive Summary

Each of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees will have met by the time of the Scrutiny Commission and a discussion has taken place at each on the proposed work programme for the year, Chairs of each Committee or the Committee Clerk will be able to update the Commission on these discussions to inform this item. Key themes emerging at the time of publication of this report are:

- A target of six meetings per committee, per municipal year
- A desire to aim for one or two substantive items at each meeting of a committee to allow for in depth investigation
- Subjects for in depth investigation should be kept broad to allow members to look into a number of areas e.g. parking, policing, economic development rather than specific policy challenges.

Policy and Scrutiny Committees may also establish Task Groups or Single Member Investigations to conduct more in depth reviews of particular policy or service areas and there may be opportunities for each committee to use these tools to further their work throughout the year.

2. Recommendations

That the Scrutiny Commission consider the feedback from each of the meetings of Policy and Scrutiny Committees which have already taken place and provide a steer to Chairs and Committees on desired consistency in terms of:

- The number of meetings for each committee each year
- The number of time Cabinet Members are asked to answer questions at committee meetings each year
- The number of substantive items to consider at each meeting of a Policy and Scrutiny Committees and the balance to strike between in depth investigation and the breadth of the issues which may require consideration by Policy and Scrutiny.

That the Scrutiny Commission note the opportunities afforded to Policy and Scrutiny in Westminster to establish task groups or commission single member reports where further in depth investigation is considered appropriate and necessary on the advice of senior officers and ideally, but not necessarily, with the support of the relevant Cabinet Member.

3. Background information

Meeting programme for 2021/22

Between the Annual council meeting in 2021 (21 April) and the Annual Council meeting in 2022 (22 May), the following meetings were held for the 2021/22 municipal year:

Westminster Scrutiny Commission – three meetings

- 21 June 2021 – City for All

- 22 November 2021 – COVID-19 and vaccine update, Climate Emergency Update, City for All update, Emergency preparedness update
- 22 March 2022 – Climate Emergency update, Staff Survey 2021, Impact of COVID-19 on Council finances, Annual Scrutiny Report

Finance, Smart City and City Management Policy and Scrutiny Committee – five meetings plus one extraordinary meeting on flooding

- 19 May 2021 – Oxford Street District
- 30 June 2021 – Waste and recycling
- *30 September 2021 – extraordinary meeting on 12 July floods, no other business*
- 19 October 2021 – Procurement
- 24 November 2021 – e-Scooter trials and Parking in the context of COVID-19
- 29 March 2022 – Councillors IT provision and Website Improvement

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee – six meetings

- 10 May 2021 – Policing in Westminster and the Ward Budget Programme
- 6 July 2021 – Noisy supercars and noise nuisance
- 14 October 2021 – Air Quality
- 17 November 2021 – Housing Capital Works
- 26 January 2022 – Planning Obligations/Affordable Housing SPD and Supply and Allocation of Social Housing 2022/23
- 9 March 2022 – Changing Futures and Rough Sleeping

Business and Children's Policy and Scrutiny Committee – six meetings plus two extraordinary meetings (Marble Arch Mound and call-in on school amalgamation)

- 26 April 2021 – the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership's Annual Report
- 19 July 2021 – Gambling Policy
- 7 October 2021 – Health and Safety in Schools and the School Inclusion Pilot
- *27 October 2021 – extraordinary meeting on the Marble Arch Mound, no other business*
- 29 November 2021 – Oxford Street District and Children and Young People's Mental Health Task Group
- 2 February 2022 – School Uniforms and School Performance Strategy
- *7 March 2022 – extraordinary meeting to hear the call in of the decision to amalgamate Westminster Cathedral and St Vincent de Paul RC Primary Schools, no other business*
- 31 March 2022 – Westminster Investment Service

Adults and Public Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee – six meetings

- 28 April 2021 – Healthwatch Report, Gordon Hospital Update and ICS Update and COVID impacts update
- 15 July 2021 – Healthwatch Report, Gordon Hospital Update and Mental health provision. Also call in of Beachcroft decision report

- 27 September 2021 – Gordon Hospital Update, Obesity and Metabolic Diseases, Public Health Funerals
- 8 November 2021 - Healthwatch Report, Gordon Hospital Update, Safeguarding Adults Executive Board Annual Report
- 24 January 2022 - Gordon Hospital Update, Oral Health, Autism Strategy
- 21 March 2022 - Gordon Hospital Update, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Vaccine take-up

Task Groups and Single Member Investigations

As set out in the Council's Constitution, each Policy and Scrutiny Committee may establish Task Groups to scrutinise issues within their terms of reference. Political proportionality does not apply to Task groups but the Opposition Group is entitled to a seat on all Task Groups. It is also possible to establish single member scrutiny where appropriate.

Task Groups operate on an informal basis and will not be subject to the formal requirements relating to meetings in respect of the issue of agendas, minutes and notice of meetings etc. However, meetings may, at the discretion of the Task Group, be open to members of the public except where the normal rules on confidentiality apply.

Every Task Group should report on a regular basis to the parent Committee in the case of a prolonged or ongoing scrutiny. In other cases a formal report should be submitted for consideration by the Parent Committee once the investigations have been completed.

It is possible to establish joint Task Groups comprising Members from more than one Policy and Scrutiny Committees in order to deal with cross-cutting issues.

Task Groups and Single Member Investigations are best used where a subject warrants a time-limited, in depth review which goes beyond that which may be possible in a single public committee meeting.

Task Groups or investigations should seek to provide recommendations to the Cabinet or senior officers and are therefore ideally and most constructively undertaken with the support of the relevant Cabinet Members or senior officers, especially where policy development is required. This is to ensure that the recommendations made have maximum impact on policy or service delivery. It is of course the prerogative of an independent Policy and Scrutiny function to look into any areas within its remit with or without the support of the Executive and recommendations should be made based on the findings of the Members involved, irrespective of whether or not Cabinet Members may be likely to accept such findings. This is a necessary function of a healthy Policy and Scrutiny system.

Task Groups and Single Member Investigations also require a significant amount of resource to deliver and due consideration should also be given to the capacity both of the Scrutiny Team and the wider organisation to support such work. It is the responsibility of the Chief Executive to ensure that the Council's Scrutiny Officer has sufficient resources to support the Council's Policy and Scrutiny function, but this must be both proportionate and reasonable.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any
of the Background Papers, please contact:**

Richard Cressey rcressey@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Work programmes for each Policy and Scrutiny Committee