

Date:	31 October 2022
Portfolio:	Communities and Public Protection
The Report of:	Councillor Aicha Less, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection
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1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 13 September 2022:

- No key decisions were made.

2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration:

2.1 Public Protection

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

We have developed the new 5-year ASB strategy. The strategy went live on 17 October and is out for public consultation which ends on 12 December. Consultation will include face-to-face meetings, group sessions with professionals, residents, and other communities as well as an on-line survey.

Waste Action Squad

Plans for the Waste Action Squad trial are currently in progress for our October launch, and we aim to tackle the challenge of dumped waste and littering through a multi-agency approach across Westminster. The Cabinet Member for City Management and Air Quality is leading this initiative.

The Waste Action Squad will be a multi-agency team working with the community to identify effective solutions to address dumping hotspots through a trial programme, taking place in key hotspot locations across Westminster starting on Monday 10th October 2022.

This trial will commence with hotspots around the North of the borough and the Waste Action Squad will be ready to engage, enforce, and educate our residents and businesses. Our partners at Veolia will be able to help make immediate improvements to street scenes during walkabouts and with extra deep-cleansing resources whilst half the team engage with residents at the Waste Action Squad base hotspot area.

We will be sharing more communications via emails with Councillors and social media closer to the launch. We look forward to developing long-term solutions to the insights we gain from our communities and promote and educate also about the good work being done across Westminster so that together we can keep our streets clean.

City Inspectors

In conjunction with the Cabinet Member for City Management & Air Quality I am responsible for deploying all regulatory enforcement activities (licensing, street based anti-social behaviour activities which are community protection related) as well as noise enforcement.

Food Safety

The Food Standards Agency Road Map is in place which gives local authorities deadlines for completing inspections arising from the period of Covid-19. The Food Team has met all previous deadlines and are now in line to meet the end of September deadline. There have been four business closures by Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notice (HEPN) recently due to poor food hygiene, serious risk of contamination and serious risk to health relating to pest infestations.

Officers detained some Egyptian Cheese at a supermarket on the Edgware due to lack of traceability, labelling and not coming from an approved premises in Egypt. The business has since been unable to provide suitable evidence of the source of the cheese and therefore it will be seized and destroyed using the provisions of the Trade in Animal Related Products (TARP) legislation.

There are 2 high profile prosecutions for food offences relating to allergen management being pursued by the team. One has a court date to be heard and the second is being submitted to our legal department for progression.

Her Late Majesty the Queen, Elizabeth II activities

During the 11-day period following the sad announcement of the death of Her Majesty the Queen, council officers supported the delivery of Operation London Bridge (OLB). Many officers across Public Protection and Licensing (PPL) played a role in helping to prepare the city for the main ceremonial days including City Inspectors, EHOs, Licensing Officers, officers from Emergency Planning and the wider PPL team. Officers supported the Borough Operational Control Room (BOCC), ensuring the city looked its best for the State Funeral and managed hazards, abandoned waste and illegal street traders. While some officers were concentrating on OLB, many others were making sure that the overall impact was minimised and our business as usual continued as normal.

2.2 Communities

Community Investment Strategy

Work is developing on the different elements – consistent processes across the council on contracts and grants, VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) property strategy, and consultation around grants for different sized organisations. A presentation was shared with the Future of Westminster Equalities group under their Cost-of-Living review session.

Westminster Connects

Westminster Connects was initially set up as an emergency response programme at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 to co-ordinate volunteers to support vulnerable residents in the community with vaccine support and food and wellbeing needs.

Westminster Connects has since transitioned into a volunteer brokerage service, connecting volunteers with residents in need, VCS organisations and businesses to support recovery in the community, and facilitating residents in taking ownership of their neighbourhoods. In addition, we set

up and directly manage 5 core volunteering services, including a shopping service, walking companions, dog walking, dog fostering and gardening. Another is in development in partnership with Adult Social Care to provide low-level home care support.

Westminster Connects have developed a systematic process to induct and connect with new volunteers and have taken part in many community events over the summer recruiting new volunteers across Westminster. Additional safeguarding training will also be given to volunteers who do home visits with shopping and walking, as they have raised concerns about vulnerable residents. We have a referral system in place and are working to make sure everyone involved with Connects knows what to do in any circumstance.

Promoting volunteer opportunities across the VCS is working well, with multiple opportunities shared and filled every fortnight. Work has been undertaken with the police and with community event organisers to make sure they are involved in all the events taking place in Westminster, including some of the arrangements for the Queen's funeral, the mini marathon, and the Westminster Dog Show.

We are planning for a relaunch of Westminster Connects when the new volunteering platform goes live. The new platform will allow VCS organisations to upload and manage their opportunities with volunteers being able to sign up directly and manage their profiles. The planned go live date is January 2023.

VCS contracts

New Healthwatch and VCS infrastructure contracts began on 1 July and are performing well. The new contracts include:

- A Bi-borough Healthwatch service that protects the health and social care provision of residents across both boroughs.
- Core infrastructure support for VCS to build capacity and systemic change in the sector.
- Volunteer outreach development that creates new and additional volunteering opportunities.

The Westminster Advice Services Partnership is under review and consultation has started with advice services across Westminster to inform service specification for a new contract from September 2023. The new service specification will be developed with key partners to respond to current need for advice services. The services will be designed to be accessible and to meet specialist needs given there is widespread concern that we do not have enough advice available for the level of demand now on benefits, debt, energy, food poverty, mental health, and complex needs.

VCS networks

The Food Network was set up at start of the pandemic in April 2020 to convene a network of food banks, community food projects, The Felix Project (Food supplier, part of the London Food Alliance) and council officers in Public Health, Housing, Children's services, Adult Social Care and Economy to help co-ordinate and manage work across Westminster to ensure people in need had access to food. The network is well attended by 15 community organisations working in advice, food, and fuel poverty services.

The network has helped shape the Cost-of-Living Strategy and highlight priorities for those most in need. For example, the North Paddington Food Bank reported to the Future of Westminster Commission on the impact of the cost of living on service users, food banks and community pantries. We also co-designed the *Westminster Worrying About Money?* leaflet with the Independent Food Aid Network in Arabic, Bengali and English, flagged the need to extend and expand the WCC Green

Doctors commissioned service, and the supported residents to complete the Winter in the City survey.

Engagement Deep Dive

The engagement deep dive has now completed, and work is underway to bring together the new offer from Communities. The work identified many different departments doing engagement work with varying levels of quality and no consistency. There is a need for guidance, agreement over key principles, co-ordination, and facilitation of a more collaborative approach. This will be delivered through bringing departments together to collaborate, creating visibility of the different workstreams, and providing guidance and training.

Approach to equalities

The Equality Objectives are now agreed, and work is underway to develop work and monitoring of those outcomes, and to scope a wider equalities strategy to deliver section 4 of the strategy.

- Staff will represent the demographic of our communities at all levels of the organisation.
- Understand our diverse communities and embed that understanding in how we shape all that we do across the Council.
- Support Westminster's communities to be sustainable, socially inclusive and empowered to act, when they are best placed to do so.
- Demonstrate inclusive leadership, strategic partnership, and a clear organisational commitment to be a leader in equality, diversity, and inclusion in the city.

We will be procuring some work around developing our approach to including the socioeconomic duty into our work.

#2035

#2035 is a collaborative approach to responding to community need and improving health outcomes. We are scoping priorities for delivery where the impact on health will be biggest. To inform this, we are working with Public Health over the scope of the new Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on inequalities. We are also speaking to Bloomberg about their support with strategies to increase employment opportunities for local people and learn from the work they did in New York to reduce health inequalities.

The programme will work across partners from Health, different departments of the Council, the police and the Department for Work and Pensions to address the wider determinants of health (housing, neighbourhoods, crime, health and wellbeing, employment skills and money, racism discrimination and digital exclusion) in North Westminster to halve the 14-year life expectancy gap between our communities in Westminster. Data on health inequalities show a clear link between deprivation and health inequality. Maps of key health conditions overlap in many cases with these maps of deprivation. The wards particularly impacted are in the North of Westminster, e.g., Westbourne, Harrow Road, Queens Park, and Church Street.

We will work collaboratively across teams and partners to embed health thinking and improve health outcomes influenced by what communities are telling us they need. We have completed mapping to

understand work that is already happening against community priorities. We are now understanding the areas which have a high impact on health outcomes and will develop these projects.

Maida Hill Market: strategic leadership support

Starting with a comprehensive stakeholder map which outlines all the existing involved stakeholders and their current roles and responsibilities, we aim to establish the gaps and duplications. Through discussions with key partners, such as Bloomberg Associates, Walterton and Elgin Community homes and St Peter's Church, we aim to offer creative and successful options, which ensure the council improves its relations and build greater trust with Harrow Road communities. Another starting point will be determining how best to offer a consistent and supportive council presence and establish better partnerships with the anchored institutions.

Additional support during the Cost-of-Living Crisis

Recently, we agreed funding for four additional Westminster citizens advice workers to answer phones due to the increasing demand for their service. They help low-income people with debt and financial advice and administer our local hardship fund. Two have been recruited so far, and recruitment is ongoing for the remaining two positions.

There are two additional food pantries being set up. One is the HAFS Academy Pantry in Church Street and the other is Emmanuel Pantry in Harrow Road. The funding grants were agreed in August, and they should be in operation by the end of the year. The pantry model is where members pay a weekly subscription of £4.50/£5.00 in exchange for around three times the value of food goods, making it a more affordable place for food shopping. Both pantries are looking to have advice services, such as Citizens Advice Bureau Westminster. The HAFS Academy Pantry are also looking to run drop-in surgeries on health and wellbeing, financial and money matters, entrepreneurship, and employment.