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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 31 October 2022:

- Review of the Council's Gambling Policy

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

2.1 Public Protection

Gambling Policy

The Gambling Policy sets out Westminster City Council's expectations for gambling operators who wish to trade within Westminster and addresses the policy concerns and risks associated with gambling. For each licensed premise, gambling operators will be required to produce a gambling risk assessment, which weighs up the key considerations or criteria within the policy and Local Area Profile.

Using the Gambling Risk Index, we have identified areas in Westminster where the concentration of certain groups or premises heighten the risk level of gambling related harm. These areas have been designated "Gambling Vulnerability Zones" and applicants must address the key considerations for those areas and provide sufficient mitigation to demonstrate that they will be reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives.

A new hours policy has been included that specifies the hours for gambling operations within Westminster. It has adopted the default hours as prescribed within the Gambling Act 2005 regulations. Requests for additional hours will need to identify any risks and provide sufficient mitigations to address the principal considerations of the Act.

The policy was agreed to by Full Council on 9 November 2022, and will come into effect from Monday, 12 December 2022.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

Public consultation on the final draft of the ASB Strategy went live on 18 October 2022. The full consultation plan includes 1-2-1 interviews, group sessions and workshops, as well as access to an

online survey. We will also re-engage with residents and community members who were involved in the strategy's initial design.

The Council has just completed its annual Autumn Nights operation focusing on anti-social behaviour, particularly involving the misuse of fireworks during October and November. Early indications show that the operation was successful and that the numbers of firework related calls was very low.

The partnership plan included pre-emptive engagement with potentially problematic young people, engagement with firework outlets and residential communities, and an increase in police presence in high-risk areas during the key dates. Not one young person engaged with prior to the operation came to police notice during the key dates over this period. We await release of the confirmed police data to fully assess the success of this year's operation.

Food Safety

The Food Standards Agency Road Map is in place, giving local authorities a rolling 3-month deadline for completing inspections arising from the period of COVID-19. The Food Team has met all previous deadlines and are in line to meet the end of December deadline.

Since our October update, Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices have resulted in three business closures due to poor food hygiene, serious risk of contamination and serious risk to health relating to pest infestations.

The council has received £36,000 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for the enforcement of new Prepacked for Direct Sale legislation (Natasha's Law). The project seeks to educate select businesses in the new legislation and allergen management with a view to enforcement action being taken if businesses are non-compliant.

There have been two high profile prosecutions for food offences relating to allergen management. One has a court date and the second is being submitted to our legal department for progression.

The Digital Transformation project in relation to food hygiene inspections and food related service requests to facilitate the new delivery model is currently on schedule.

2.2 Communities

Community Investment Strategy

Engagement with the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Council officers has revealed the need for a centralised approach around defining needs, identifying outcomes, streamlining grant processes, and measuring the impact of the grants. Work is underway with Procurement and Legal to understand how we can develop a standard review process on grants and contract guidelines, which will support our goal to move to a more consistent and centralised approach. Any changes will then be applied to future contacts and grants across the Council.

A grants web page is being designed specifically for organisations, which will show what Council grants are available, and when, for that year. It is planned to go-live from December 2022. Information will be added on the web page on a registration process, an application form, and an impact reporting form over the next 6 months.

Engagement with the VCS is ongoing, with deep dives around impact reporting and evaluation planned for November and December 2022. A presentation on the Community Investment Strategy was recently given to members of the Future of Westminster Commission. It covered the importance of ensuring the strategy has relevant sections for small, medium, and large organisations, and refers and works collaboratively with health, schools, and other projects across the Council, which involve the VCS.

The Communities Team is exploring community participation options, including identifying needs, community development, capacity building and participatory budgeting. Engagement will be undertaken with residents and community organisations to explore these options in more depth.

A paper identifying Community Grants – including a Community Priorities Extension, an Emergency Fund, a Community Events Fund, and a Future Core Funding Grant – has been developed for decision. This is in addition to the wider Community Grants Fund from Public Health; all of which will increase funding into the VCS.

Decisions will be required on grants processes, decision making processes, VCS rent policy revisions, core funding approaches, and a single application system.

Westminster Connects

Westminster Connects was initially set up in 2020 as an COVID-19 emergency response programme but has since transitioned into a volunteer brokerage service. Its renewed focus is on supporting recovery in the community through connecting volunteers with residents, VCS organisations, and businesses.

Westminster Connects volunteers have been active in a number of events including Memorial Day, the Christmas Tree in Trafalgar Square, the Sir Simon Milton Foundation Tea Dance, and preparing for Christmas Hamper delivery.

The Give 16 Campaign – which reminds staff that they can contribute 16 hours of their working time to volunteering – has relaunched the Language Café, which provides residents who want to improve their English with conversation sessions. It is run by the Westminster Adult Education Service and takes place weekly at City Hall and Lisson Grove.

We are actively recruiting more volunteers, in particular, at Employment Fairs; volunteering is being showcased as an option for university students who are looking for experience in their area of study and as a path into employment. We are following up with any expressions of interest promptly, to ensure we are engaging quickly and directly with potential volunteers.

VCS contracts

Consultation on the Westminster Advice Services Partnership is underway. Feedback gained through this process will be used to inform any changes to service specification for a new contract from September 2023.

The new service specification will be developed with key partners to respond to current needs for advice services. The services will be designed to be accessible and to meet specialist needs, particularly given there is widespread concern that we do not have enough advice available for the current level of demand. Currently, all services are at full capacity, and many are unable to take on new referrals.

VCS networks

ActiveWestminster Networks in North, Central and South Westminster are engaging the community in physical activity, health, and sport, through coordinated conversations and addressing local need in the area. The Networks are addressing wider inequality and inactivity issues, while also focusing on local area issues – these are youth violence (North), health and wellbeing initiatives (Central), and homelessness (South). There are also small grants available via the Network for community organisations to deliver against these outcomes.

The monthly online forum, Community Alliance, has recently launched. It is chaired by Cllr Nafsika Butler-Thalassis and Jackie Rosenberg, Chief Executive of One Westminster, and brings together organisations who are working to support people through the winter with warm spaces and activities. Each month, the Council will present what it is doing, what support the government is providing, and what our analysis tells us about those most affected by the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Community organisations will feed in with their own responses and provide any insight they are receiving from residents who are using their services.

Engagement Deep Dive

Findings from the review are being developed into an action plan. This will incorporate several deliverables, including the masterclasses, charter of participation, virtual resource, and a consultation and engagement hub.

As part of the review, officials met with residents, Council staff and held workshops. Some of the findings from the different groups have been provided below:

- The community asked for genuine involvement, a forward plan, and for their time and feedback to be valued, rather than being informed after the fact.
- Officers identified a need for better collaboration across departments, to upskill in reaching a wider demographic of people, and to involve the community to a greater extent in the design of work.

The Council undertakes a large volume of different types of communication, consultation, participation, and engagement. Improving our ways of working and best practice will take time and require collaboration and support.

Our work will include an ambassador's programme, practitioner network through our Centre for Excellence, development of standardised tools and templates and advice from the team, monitoring of the forward plan of engagement and consultations, and development of methods to increase participation of the community in our work.

Approach to equalities

The team published the refreshed objectives in August 2022. They have since started to scope the remit of a wider external equalities plan. The objectives are:

- 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.

Work is underway to embed the objectives across each department and develop performance targets. Findings will also inform a wider external equalities strategy around working with our communities and access to our services. The Equality Trust will be starting a piece of work around developing our socioeconomic duty.

#2035

This programme is a collaborative approach to responding to community needs, reducing the life expectancy gap, and improving health outcomes. It is a cross-sector place-based strategy that examines wider determinants of health (housing, crime, employment, access to health services, and neighbourhood and community connection).

The partnership includes the Police, DWP, Imperial College Healthcare, GP Commissioning, Public Health, and Communities. The relationships between the external partners will be developed and strengthened through a steering group that has been set up.

We will be planning a workshop to develop key priorities to reduce the life expectancy gap. Imperial are providing resources to help in scoping which projects will be the most effective to reach the goals of the programme.

Maida Hill Market: strategic leadership support

The Communities team have met with officials from the Licensing Team, Parking Enforcement and NSL contractors on the issue of illegal parking. The following actions were agreed and taken:

- A letter was drafted and shared with Licensed Traders about their vehicles.
- Parking and NSL (provider for parking enforcement) will install temporary CCTV to monitor the area for violations, which will be used to analyse how much Police support is required.
- An agreement was finalised with social enterprise company, Maida Hill Place, to retain their presence on the square and, in partnership with the Council, to allow an officer and police presence and station in the area, which supports communities.
- A meeting with the Basic Command Unit has been arranged to discuss policing in the area and the tackling of ASB. This session will include senior officers to escalate matters and renew a more practical agreement, which supports Council officers sufficiently.
- Options are under review to offer the domino players, (who currently occupy the Maida Hill Square), an alternative indoor venue, whereby they can continue to socialise in the area and stay warm. Domino sessions will be managed and run by community providers.
- Both sets of toilets on the square are now open and operational.
- After Broadwick Street, the over ground automatic public convenience (APC) is next on the refurbishment programme. The latest timeline shows work should commence just after the New Year. Officers are aware of the need to start and complete these works as quickly as possible.