

**Date:** 25 April 2023

**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 the last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 12 December 2022:**

No decisions have been made during this period.

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

**2.1 Public Protection**

Staffing update

- Mark Wiltshire joined the Council on 17 April as Director of Public Protection and Licensing. Mark has a long history of working in PPL roles and spent 16 years in Ealing before recent work in Birmingham, supporting them on their improvement journey.
- The PP&L reorganisation began on 15 March, with a staff consultation closing on 29 April. The vision for the service is to ensure that every resident, business, and visitor of Westminster is able to thrive in a clean, safe, and quiet city, through a clear area-based approach. The reorganisation will deliver the budgetary savings required, respond to new priorities and commitments, while delivering culture change, embedding the Westminster Way values and behaviours.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

With the launch of the Five Year Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, work is underway to develop the multi-agency strategy group who will lead on developing the annual action plans that will deliver against our strategy objectives.

Basic Command Unit (BCU) update

- Chief Superintendent Louise Puddefoot has replaced replacing Owain Richards as Westminster's Borough Commander. CS Puddefoot has worked in Westminster previously and understands Westminster's crime challenges.
- Superintendent Beth Pirie has also started as Westminster dedicated Neighbourhood and Partnership Superintendent. The provision of an additional Superintendent to Westminster has resulted from the new MPS Commissioner's drive to improve Neighbourhood Policing.

### Pedicabs

City Inspector officers attended City of London Magistrates Court on 15 March 2023 for eight prosecutions under the Control of Pollution Act 1974 in relation to pedicabs, with eight cases resulting in a total of £4,792 in fines, costs, and victim surcharges.

New leaflets have been distributed by City Inspectors and partners in relevant areas informing the riders of the number of prosecutions and fines given out in 2022. There has been positive feedback from the community on the campaign material and the information on volumes and outcomes of prosecutions.

### Busking and Street Entertainment

The review of the Street Entertainment Licensing policy following its first year of operation is ongoing, with stakeholders regularly engaged including street performers, businesses, and resident organisations. The analysis of data collected via the review and a targeted engagement questionnaire is underway with additional sessions planned for key stakeholders in April. The final report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for consideration at the end of April.

### Night stars / safety

The Night Stars, a team of volunteers who work with the West End's evening and night-time economy businesses to promote women's safety and reduce violence against women and girls, have helped over four hundred people over the past year. This represents an increase compared with the four years the Soho Angels were active, where volunteers assisted in approximately 1,400 cases, on average 350 each year.

The Night Stars service is one pillar of the council's Women's Night Safety Programme and is an integral role in the key aspects of the other projects, particularly the rollout of the new Safe Havens across the West End.

The new operating model introduced in October 2022 means that volunteers can now:

- Attend hotspot areas much earlier and work on preventing visitors from crime victimisation or later needing medical intervention by supporting people on-street quickly and effectively.
- Work with transport providers (TFL, National Rail, Uber, Bolt) to provide safer travel methods for volunteers.
- Work with other pillars of Westminster City Council's Night Safety initiative by directing individuals to 'safe havens' as opposed to a hub and implementing behavioural change campaigns.

The Night Stars service is due to take a larger focus on prevention, by:

- Introducing an earlier shift from 7pm with a gazebo in place.
- Introducing anti-spiking kits to Night Stars packs.
- Focusing on providing emotional and mental health support to prevent further issues for individuals and night-time economy businesses.

In March 2022, the service expanded to cover various locations in the West End. The aim is to increase volunteer numbers by 25%, as well as ensuring current Night Stars are supported to continue, given the intensive nature of volunteering.

### Short Term Lets

In the recent period, STL officers have conducted 40 visits and have served three planning contravention notices, where a breach of the 90-night limit has been evidenced.

The government has announced that homeowners who want to list their properties on Airbnb or other letting sites will have to enter their addresses on a register allowing local authorities to have a database of short-term lets, meaning the Council will know who to take enforcement action against. It delivers on Westminster's long-standing lobbying ask to tackle problematic rentals where fly tipping, noise, ASB, and unlicensed music events occur. Further details have yet to be published, and officers will work with HMG.

## **Communities**

### Community Investment Strategy

The VCS strategy is going through its final external consultation, with publishing and circulation expected to take place towards the end of April or the beginning of May.

### Westminster Connects

- New introduction sessions piloted for Westminster Adult Education Services ESOL learners as a pathway into volunteering.
- The London Chinatown Chinese Association (LCCA) hosted an event in partnership with Westminster Connects to thank volunteers who delivered New Year's Day and Festival of Spring events.
- Volunteering opportunities for staff expanded, including Language Café (with WAES), homework clubs (with Libraries), Digital Friends (with Digital Inclusion), mentors (with the charity Unfold) and reading volunteers (with charity Doorstep Library).
- Westminster Connects will now look to partner with the Met Police and event organisers seeking volunteers for large ceremonial events in Westminster.

### VCS contracts

- The Westminster Advice Service partnership has been extended for a further two years advice services see significant increases in demand due to the cost-of-living crisis.

### VCS networks

- The Westminster City Council Community Alliance and Food and Energy Network have fed into the review of data on the impact of the cost-of-living, and where council resources are best invested.
- Translations of the 'Westminster Worrying About Money' leaflet in five additional languages (Dari, Farsi, Sudanese Arabic, Tigrinya, and French, also available in Arabic and Bengali). In addition, a Money Counts training session linked to the 'Westminster Worrying About Money' leaflet is being developed for VCS organisations and council departments.
- Cost-of-living Food Support Grants have been provided to food banks and pantries.
- The council was awarded the 'Most Improved Award; by *Sustain: The Alliance for Better Food and Farming* at their report launch on 28 March, for work delivered by the Food Network over the last year, including working collaboratively across all the food banks, food pantries and advice, energy, and debt services.

### Engagement and Consultation

- A forward plan is in place to allow teams to provide us with details on their consultations.
- The new website is due to go live in mid-April featuring a number of current consultations with a view to adding a section on those that are upcoming.

- Teams are engaging regularly with the Quality Improvement Board with an officer level operational meeting ahead of the Board to provide additional support.
- The first Engagement Practitioner network will run on 29 March, and is an officer led group of consultation and engagement leads from across the organisation, who are striving to improve oversight and delivery of consultation and engagement activities.
- The consultation on the Charter for Community Participation was relaunched at the end of February to drive an increase in responses.

#### Community development

- 108 applications have been received for the Community Priorities Programme from across the borough. 24 resident panel members have been recruited and are representative of Westminster residents (care leavers, young people, refugees, etc).
- The official launch of the Register of Active Residents took place as part of the Fairer Westminster Delivery plan launch at the Grand Junction event on 21 March. 35 residents have already signed up to the register.

#### North Paddington & Maida Hill)

- The April Partnership session of the North Paddington Partnership Board will focus on community engagement, which is integral to the approach and delivery of the North Paddington programme.
- Works on the Maida Hill project are scheduled to commence in the autumn of this year, subject to community support in the final consultation, which is underway. In the interim, the Communities team will continue with delivery and management needs, with particular focus on community feedback and concerns.
- The Maida Hill Community Steering group was assembled in March, with the first session focused on listening to community views on the local area. The next session is scheduled to take place at the start of April, with the theme focused on the Maida Hill Project.