



City of Westminster

**Communities, City Management
and Air Quality Policy and
Scrutiny Committee**

Date:	19 September 2023
Portfolio:	Communities and Public Protection
The Report of:	Councillor Aicha Less, Cabinet Member for Communities and Public Protection
Report Author and Contact Details:	Nick Porter-Ch'ng nporter-ch'ng@westminster.gov.uk

Key decisions made in the preceding period since the last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 31 July 2023:

A decision was made to extend the contract for the Westminster Advice Partnership on 10 August 2023

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

1.0 Public Protection & Licensing

1.1 Crime & Disorder and Community Safety

A New Met for London

Westminster police leadership team were joined by Deputy Commissioner Dame Lynne Owens, and Assistant Commissioner Matt Jukes at a community conversation event to discuss the Commissioners proposal for change across the metropolitan police service.

It was great to see and hear from so many community members and Councillors feeding into this work, and I have committed to working with the local police leadership team to continue finding ways for our residents voice to be heard.

I have requested a meeting with the borough commander to plan how we can work together to develop a plan for Westminster that starts to rebuild confidence in policing, by focussing on what is important to our residents and business.

Safer Neighbourhood Board

Despite attempts to secure funding from MoPAC we have yet to agree a package of funding to establish a Safer Neighbourhoods Board for Westminster. I have written to the Mayor asking for his support, as I am clear we need to find ways to support our

diverse community to take part in policing conversations and help to bridge the gap between community leaders and policing.

The Community Safety Team and our Communities colleagues are developing a proposal, which with my support will allow us to launch a new board for the new year, and therefore benefit from the funding opportunities that will become available in the next financial year.

Serious Youth Violence

Community Safety, working closely with Children's Services through the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit continue to work residents, supporting young people and their families. The teams' skills and expertise meant they were well placed to lead the community response to the tragic murder of a young person in Paddington Green on 19 June. An initial community impact assessment was completed by the MPS and was used to ensure that partners were aware of and able to respond to any tensions and risks of further violence.

Following the incident, Community Safety brought together council services and external partners to review the support in place for the family and community and ensure safeguarding arrangements were in place. A bid has been submitted to the Violence Reduction Unit for funding for preventative activities with a targeted cohort of young people over the summer holidays and to fund a community outing for families in the area promoting engagement.

1.2 Neighbourhoods

1.2.1 Waste Enforcement

On Thursday 31st August WCC successfully prosecuted a business on Edgware Road (Abwab Global Limited, 320 Edgware Road) for not providing a waste transfer note (WTN) after they asked to provide this, which is a breach of section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. This follows other successful and ongoing prosecutions of businesses for WTN and fly tipping offences in the Little Venice Ward/Edgware Road area. Under advice the offender pleaded guilty and on this occasion the offender was fined £375, ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £150, and £500 costs were awarded, a significant sum for such an offence. Business must legally have a registered waste carrier to dispose of their waste and provide evidence when requested (businesses legally must retain 2 years' worth of evidence regarding WTNs). Businesses will be asked for evidence if officers suspect waste offences are being committed in the nearby area or by a specific business.

City Inspectors have been working closely with ward members and our cabinet member to target problematic dumping sites and streets where cleanliness is a problem. Sustained enforcement has resulted in over 2200 engagement contacts since October last year and has enabled over 120 areas to be deep cleansed. Action plans have been created for each specific problem, with actions ranging from promoting bulky waste collections with signage and leaflets, working with the animal warden regarding issues of dog fouling in problematic areas, and enforcement operations against poor waste behaviours in specific

locations.

As we move into the autumn, our City Inspectors will be focussing on commercial waste compliance and we will be able to report back on this approach at a future meeting.

1.2.2 Westminster Bridge

Westminster Bridge continues to present itself as a focus of criminality specifically focused on tourists and visitors to Westminster. We have focussed activity is focused on illegal gambling, unlicensed street trading, including ice cream vans. Part of our approach has been to work with partner agencies (Metropolitan Police, Lambeth Council and TFL) to undertake joint operations on the bridge which has resulted in the issuing of community protection notice warnings, and arrests. We also continue to undertake regular patrols on the bridge to disrupt activity and build intelligence. Partnership working has enabled Lambeth to prosecute a number of those trading from ice cream vans on the bridge, for unlicensed street trading. We achieved good media coverage of the issues in April following a multi-agency operation and are working with comms partners to increase communications about the issues and work being done to resolve it.

1.2.3 Unlicensed Music Event in Westbourne Ward

Reports were received by the City Inspector Service that an unlicensed music event had been taking place, with complaints of loud music and over 30 people in attendance. The service worked closely with the police to investigate the activity, and delivered a pre-emptive noise abatement notice, on the individual responsible. A proactive operation was put in place to ensure the notice was not breached, and no event took place the following week. The service also worked with other local authorities to ensure the event was not dispersed to another location. This is a good example of the services re-orientation to a more proactive and outcome based approach which will benefit our residents and businesses.

1.2.4 ASB Awareness week

City Inspectors have been working in partnership with local police teams to target areas of concern with regards to Anti-Social Behaviour. During Anti-social behaviour awareness week joint patrols were carried out in the Mayfair area due to number of complaints around aggressive begging and table surfing. The teams patrolled the identified hotspot areas, and this resulted in three community protection warnings being issued and two notices to leave.

The opportunity was also taken to visit businesses in the area to give advice on what they could be doing to prevent thefts from customers, this was well received by the business, and we are looking for ways that we can do more of this joined up working which can take a targeted approach to issues that have been raised by the local community.

1.2.5 Dockless Bike Operations

A pre-planned operation took place on Thursday 15th and Friday 16th June to tackle dockless bikes left in places where they could cause a hazard to pedestrians. All dockless bike operators were notified of this activity. One bike was seized on Wardour Street junction with Hollen Street that was observed to be dangerous, as it was obstructing the highway at a busy junction with dropped curbs. City Inspectors reported more than 30 bikes to the relevant operators likely to cause a nuisance and followed up to ensure these reports had been actioned. We continue to work with operators to manage this behaviour, and we will act where bikes are parked in an inconsiderate way that causes issues with pedestrians, particularly those with visual impairments.

Across services, we are supporting the new dockless bike scheme, which with the agreement of operators we hope to see a significant improvement in compliance and reduce the impact on the streets. Whilst we hope this will reduce the need for enforcement through self-regulation by operators, we will continue to keep this under review and will not hesitate to use our enforcement powers if this is proportionate to keep our streets clean and safe for residents and visitors.

1.3 Regulation and Enforcement

1.3.1 Anti-Fraud Programme

15 referrals from victims have been received from National Trading Standards Scams Team all of whom received support from Trading Standards. This include 1 chronic victim whose payment was intercepted and returned to the victim. 5 referrals from Adult Social care for which victims are receiving support from Trading Standards.

We continue to work across services and with partners to ensure those who are vulnerable to exploitation from fraud.

1.3.2 Trading standards

The trading standard service have initiated a prosecution against one premises in connection to the sale of illicit goods. The director of the company has failed to attend the court proceedings against the business, and an arrest warrant has been issued for this individual. The service continues to work to ensure that all businesses in Westminster adhere to safe trading practices, and ensure that consumers are protected.

1.3.3 Food Safety and Standards Enforcement

The food safety team has been working to regulate the sale of food supplements placed on the UK market by a company with a registered address in Westminster. A business was selling food supplements containing an ingredient Nicotinamide Mononucleotide (NMN) which has been identified as a novel food and yet to be authorised for use in the United Kingdom. An investigation revealed that the business had little understanding or knowledge of what is permitted by legislation and resulted in the service having to intervene. Following the action

by the Food Service, the business has now closed its online shop for customers in the UK ensuring that consumers are protected.

1.3.4 Food & Health & Safety prosecutions

The Food & Health & Safety Team were in Court in August for 2 prosecutions.

The first related to the prosecution of Pret A Manger, sandwich and coffee shop.

This prosecution arises out of an incident on 29 July 2021, when a member of staff became entrapped in a walk-in freezer at the remote kitchen servicing the Pret A Manger outlet in Victoria Coach Station.

Pret pleaded guilty to the offence and, on 29 August 2023 before District Judge Minhas at the Westminster Magistrates' Court, the Company was fined £800,000 and ordered to pay the Council's full costs, in addition to a victim surcharge, within 28 days.

The second case related to the prosecution of GYU Ltd who were the Food Business operators of Olle Korean Barbecue located on Shaftesbury Avenue, London W1.

The prosecution was pursued as a result of a serious infestation of mice and cockroaches observed during a visit on 04 July 2022 to the premises in response to a customer complaint. The visit by officers resulted in the immediate closure of the food business until the pest control issues had been resolved. During court proceedings at Westminster Magistrates Court on 30 August 2023, GYU Ltd pleaded guilty to three offences and were fined £11,000. The Council were also awarded full costs in addition to a victim surcharge.

1.3.5 Food Safety Plan

I have reviewed the Food Safety Service Plan for 2023/24, which included a review of activity for 2022/23.

In summary, this showed a total of 1617 food hygiene inspections and 1364 food standards inspections undertaken by the service. Over the same period 1172 service requests were investigated, and 27 Hygiene Emergency Prohibition Notices were served. All of these combine to ensure the safety of residents and support a fair trading environment for all businesses across the city.

The 2023/24 plan sets out a inspection program for all 5176 registered food premises within Westminster, together with a proactive sampling programme to be implemented alongside proactive projects looking at the high level of mice complaints resulting in a high number of Hygiene Emergency Prohibition notices served in the last financial year. There will also be a review of premises selling products that are non-compliant with labelling regulations and novel food legislation and we will look to implement a Healthy Catering Commitment in partnership with public health.

I have been advised that 100% of all high-risk food premises (rated category A-B) due for inspection have been completed in quarter one.

1.4 Licensing

1.4.1 Problematic Street Performer

Whilst carrying out patrols in Soho during the Pride event City Inspectors saw a known problematic unlicensed street performer using a large speaker on the public highway, this individual has also been the subject of numerous complaints from residents due to the noise nuisance he causes, and he has been spoken to on at least two occasions prior to this where he refused to give any of his details. The city inspectors who were working alongside police partners made attempts to engage with the male, but he ignored officers and continued to play his music. A decision was then made that to prevent any noise nuisance being caused to residents and businesses to take enforcement action in the form of seizing the noise making equipment and reporting for the offence of busking without a license and not being in a designated busking area. When city inspectors made attempts seize the equipment the male tried to prevent this from happening and police partners stepped in to prevent a breach of the peace, the equipment was eventually seized, and the male has been reported for relevant offences.

1.4.2. Notting Hill Carnival

Notting Hill Carnival took place on the streets of Westminster over the bank holiday weekend of 27 & 28 August this year. It is one of Europe's largest street events, attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors every year. The first outdoor festival took to the streets of Nottinghill in 1966. Whilst Nottinghill Carnival is rooted in Caribbean culture - with its Windrush-generation influence remaining strongly evident - it is at the same time uniquely London. Westminster City Council are not the organisers of the Nottinghill Carnival. We (along with RBKC and Brent Council) assist in facilitating, Nottinghill Carnival Limited, having a safe and successful event as far as is reasonably practicable. Each year the council contributes to a joint Carnival Residents booklet which goes to all the wards impacted by the event so that residents are aware how they might be impacted by the event.

The parade route covers streets within both WCC and RBKC with the judging zone located on Great Western Road in Westminster. There are 35 static sound systems across the carnival footprint with 6 locations in Westminster, 2 on St Luke's Road, 2 on Leamington Road Villas, 1 on Ledbury and 1 on Talbot Road. Street trading also takes place in three specific Locations in Westminster, including Westbourne Park Road - 14 cooking pitches, Talbot Road - 20 available pitches (3 BBQ pitches, 9 trailer pitches, 8 non-food pitches)

and Maida Hill Market – 8 pitches. We also support the installation of toilets (180 in total) across 13 locations.

The event receives multi-agency support from many external agencies, including the Met, GLA, RBKC, Brent, LFB and LAS. Internally, services from across the council provide support including City Promotion Events and Filming, Highways, Parking, Comms, Housing and PPL. On the ground over the weekend, PPL & CPEF teams provide over 30 officers to ensure that carnival is as safe as possible. Officers include City Inspectors, EHOs & Noise. Activities include licensing, food hygiene and H&S inspections, noise monitoring, illegal street trading and liaising with Veolia to support the monumental clean up both days.

2.0 Communities

2.1 Westminster Connects

- 2.1.1** We celebrated National Volunteers week with a picnic for our most active volunteers at St James Park. Volunteers supported the Trooping the Colour preparations, WCC Community Coronation event, West End Live, WCC Blue Cross Dog Show and South West Fest. We supported the One Westminster Volunteer Fair with over 200 residents attending and 30 organisations represented. We are having early conversations with Childrens' Services about developing a volunteer handyman service
- 2.1.2** Q1 figures - 147 active Westminster Connects volunteers in Q1, totalling 5,834 hours of volunteering time helping their communities.

2.2 Changing Futures

- 2.2.1** We have successfully obtained an additional 1-year funding (£1.22m) from DLUCH & the National Lottery Community Fund to extend Westminster Changing Futures programme until end March 2025. The additional funding will allow us to continue the delivery of the Changing Futures specialist team (support offer for 18–25-year-olds facing Multiple Disadvantages) and several systems change projects like the Artemis project, which aims to test new ways of supporting prison leavers facing multiple disadvantages. The outcomes of the Westminster programme are being directly fed into the Changing Futures national research to aid national policy alongside informing the development of our local case for change and long-term, system improvement recommendations.

2.3 Community Hubs

- 2.3.1** The community hubs programme has been established to enable easier community access to services. The services might be ones we as a council are responsible to deliver, or where our VCS or other partners are lead providers. We have mapped current provision across the city and have accessed opportunities in our or partners existing assets.
- 2.3.2** The key principles that the community hub programme is based on are; localised need and the community voice should be the key influence in the service design, community hubs will complement other

forms of hubs- Youth and family hubs for example and the council does not have to be the lead service. Where we can seek to exploit opportunities for efficiencies, we will do so.

2.3.3 Currently we are in phase 1, that includes planning about opportunities in the South and Soho and the progression of two hubs. High level strategic and outline business cases have been drafted and an overall (as well as individual) community co-design group established this month to determine the services and design of individual hubs. Working with local communities, ward councillors and other local key players is a crucial part of this programme.

Paul Perkins has now started as our Community Hub Programme Lead

We are undertaking a programme refresh which will update timelines on the basis of a rapid review of community need data, engagement planning and service engagement

Further programme updates will be provided to members

2.3.4 The two hubs currently in progress are:

Bayswater Community Hub

The intention is to provide a housing management office with flexible community hub provision. We aim to:

- Procure the refurbishment works in the autumn for completion early in the new year.
- Work with housing services to investigate a housing management surgery in the interim, until the refurbishment works are completed.

A project programme has been created for the refurbishment timeline.

Ernest Harris House Community Hub.

Some minor remedial works are required to the space and works have started with initial surveys taking place. The Project Team will:

- Work with the Community Co-design Group to develop a management operating model as well as service design.
- Aim to complete the remedial works for handover in the winter.

2.4 Citizen's Advice Bureau

2.4.1 Citizen's Advice Bureau direct award contract to be finalised by Procurement/Legal and issued to the provider