

POLICY AND SCRUTINY

at Westminster City Council

Annual Report 2015–2016



Content

- 3** Foreword
- 4** How does Policy and Scrutiny work at Westminster?
- 5** Westminster City Council Policy and Scrutiny Structure
- 6** Westminster Scrutiny Commission
- 7** Adults, Health and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee
- 8** Children, Sport and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee
- 10** Environment and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee
- 12** Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee
- 14** Thanks and Further Information
- 14** Appendix 1

Foreword



Councillor Ian Adams
Chairman of the Westminster Scrutiny Commission

The role of Policy and Scrutiny in Westminster is vital to hold decision makers, both inside and outside the council, to account. It also plays an important part in developing and reviewing policy and in inviting in expert, external perspectives on how we, as a council, can do our utmost to improve services for residents, visitors and businesses.

In accordance with City for All, the council's overarching vision, each of our four committees ensures that Westminster residents, visitors and businesses have a share in the prosperity of the City, have a healthier City and work to protect the unique heritage of our City. Through holding the council and our partners to account, we work to ensure that Westminster's commitments are always being met. I want to recognise the hard work of our frontline councillors and thank them for their continued efforts in this important work.

Contained within this report is just a small selection of highlights of the last year of Policy and Scrutiny at Westminster, demonstrating the breadth and depth of ward councillor dedication.

How Does Policy and Scrutiny Work at Westminster?

Scrutiny is vital in promoting local accountability as it allows frontline councillors (non-executive, backbench) to hold the council's Cabinet Members (executive) to account. Importantly, other partners that provide services within the City, such as the NHS and CityWest Homes, are also subject to scrutiny, so the process acts as an important tool for frontline councillors to champion the interests of residents. In Westminster, the Scrutiny Committees and the commission not only examine the work of the council and monitor performance; they also actively contribute to developing policy by conducting research and making recommendations on how services can be improved. They serve to shine a light on and bring transparency to services and decisions by bringing the evidence into a public arena and giving frontline councillors a chance to question and inform services. This is why in Westminster it is called Policy and Scrutiny, instead of overview and scrutiny, which is what you may hear it called in other places.

To develop policy and examine specific issues in more depth, committees typically establish councillor-led task groups. Over the last year, examples of task groups include the Sustainable Travel Task Group. As part of this work, councillors will often hear from expert witnesses, question key officers and Cabinet Members, consult with relevant stakeholders and conduct site visits. Findings are then fed back to committees and conclusions presented to the Cabinet Member or partner for action. An individual member can also examine an issue in detail on behalf of the committee, this is called a Single Member Study (SMS).

The work programmes for the Policy and Scrutiny Committees are typically developed at the start of the municipal year but items can be added at any time if important issues arise. To find out more, please visit the page for the relevant committee to find upcoming meeting dates and agendas. If you have a suggestion for a topic that you think could benefit from being scrutinised, please contact scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk

Attending policy and scrutiny meetings

Members of the public are welcome to attend Policy and Scrutiny Committee meetings. Meetings are usually held in City Hall, 64 Victoria Street, London SW1, 17th Floor, unless otherwise stated. Task Group meetings are open to the public, but at the discretion of the Chairman.

If you would like to attend a Policy and Scrutiny meeting, or you have any questions please feel free to contact the team at scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk or telephone **020 7641 2636**.



Westminster City Council Policy and Scrutiny Structure



Westminster Scrutiny Commission



Ian Adams
Chairman, Westminster
Scrutiny Commission

What does the Commission do?

The Westminster Scrutiny Commission is the overarching body which is responsible for the management and co-ordination of the council's Policy and Scrutiny function. The Members are the Chairmen of the respective Committees, alongside an opposition representative.

The Commission has a number of important roles in the operation of the council. It is responsible for:

- scrutinising the Leader and the Chief Executive of the council in person
- the work programmes of all Policy and Scrutiny Committees
- scrutinising the Leader's portfolio and cross-cutting council programmes, including but not limited to Strategy and Communications, Government Relations activity, Growth, Performance, the West End Partnership, Equalities, the council's Pay Policy and the Royal Parks Board.

Highlights from the year

The Commission met twice during 2015/16 in May and November 2015. The Commission focussed on receiving updates from the Leader of the council on matters within her portfolio and from the Chief Executive who provided updates on matters of corporate interest.

In May the Leader provided an update on the council's strategic plan, City for All. The commission noted that the ambition was for:

A City of Aspiration – seeking to ensure that communities were able to share in the economic prosperity of Westminster and to reduce long-term unemployment;

A City of Choice – creating opportunities for people to make responsible choices for themselves, their families and their neighbourhoods, and to live more healthy lifestyles; and

A City of Heritage – taking forward the commitment to protect and enhance the fabric and character of Westminster.

Commission members also discussed the broader vision of supporting Small and Medium Enterprises, and the role of improved availability and speed of broadband in doing this. This has since been picked up as a lobbying priority by the Leader and also examined by the Environment and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee, holding to account both BT Openreach and Ofcom.

In November, the Leader highlighted the launch of the West End Partnership and the Commission discussed the business growth that could arise from it.

At this session the Commission also questioned the Chief Executive about a number of issues. These included, devolution of powers from central government, the impact on growth and future arrangements arising from changes to public sector finances, findings from the latest staff and residents surveys, housing, mental health services, progress in delivering The Westminster Way programme and staff recruitment and retention.

Adults, Health and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Antonia Cox¹
Chairman, Adults, Health and
Public Protection Committee

What does the committee do?

The committee examines the broad range of issues that make up the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Adults and Public Health and the Cabinet Portfolio for Public Protection. The Adults, Health and Public Protection Committee has a statutory duty to be consulted on changes to health services. The committee also acts as Westminster's Crime and Disorder Committee and carries out the scrutiny of decisions made, or action taken, by the Safer Westminster Partnership.

The Health Urgency Sub-Committee (which can be convened to consider urgent items as and when required) met in November to receive updates on the redesign of Community Mental Health Services and on plans to improve the Urgent Care Centre at St Mary's Hospital.

Safe in the City - the final report and recommendations of the Single Member Study of Councillor Ian Rowley was ratified by committee. The review examined supported accommodation for 16–25 year olds in Westminster. The report and its recommendations can be found [here](#). All of the recommendations were implemented, making life safer for young people in supported accommodation in the city.

Highlights from the Year

The committee considered an early draft of the **Health and Well Being Strategy**, which is the borough-specific approach to delivery of the five year Sustainability and Transformation Plan locally for Westminster. It has stayed engaged throughout the year highlighting concerns which have fed into each version of the strategy on its way to the decision making body – the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The committee also reviewed a report on **strategic approaches to mental health** and the need for early intervention for young people to prevent long term mental health problems enduring into adulthood. This recommendation has contributed to youth mental health being a key priority within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The committee received a report on the **Patient Journey** from the managing directors of the two clinical commissioning groups. They outlined their plans for improving the patient experience in Westminster, which included greater self-management, improving GP services, joining up different parts of the health system, improving mental health services and changing hospital provision. The committee discussed how effective patient groups were in highlighting issues from a patient perspective. They recommended that the patient journey should be able to support people with complex multiple needs and that patients should be involved in measuring service outcomes.

The committee also visited/took part in the following visits throughout the year: the Gordon Hospital, the Westminster Perinatal Service and participated in the Rough Sleeper Count in November 2015.

A Guide to Health and Social Care in Westminster was also published this year. This was commissioned by the committee to ensure that councillors, officers and stakeholders are able to understand the complicated landscape and new powers that local government has over health and social care services. This Guide is available on request.

¹ From January 2016 onwards, preceded by Councillor David Harvey, until his appointment to Cabinet.

Children, Sport and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Andrew Smith
Chairman, Children, Sport and Leisure Committee

What does the committee do?

The Children, Sport and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee scrutinises work covered under the portfolios of the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Cabinet Member for Sports and Leisure. The committee reviews the council's education function for children and young people, including the opportunities for education, training and learning outside the school environment and pre-school learning. It also scrutinises the following key policy and service areas: libraries, neighbourhoods and civic engagement, volunteering and advice services, parks and open spaces, and arts and culture.

This year's highlights

Westminster's **Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU)** was reviewed by the committee in October 2015. The committee heard that in 2011 Westminster had a very high level of serious youth violence compared to other London Boroughs and there was, therefore, a need for the council to improve its understanding of gang related and serious youth violence.

The committee heard from the Metropolitan Police Force, who discussed their work to tackle gangs in the borough and how the work of the IGU and information sharing had been beneficial to Westminster; and the National Probation Service.

The committee recommended that the council and the IGU continued to work collaboratively, with partners and other London Boroughs, to explore practical ways of sharing their work, knowledge and data. The committee encouraged the IGU to continue to build on its good work to date in reducing serious youth crime but also pushed it to be more ambitious in its targets. As a result of these recommendations the IGU have conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of impact and they regularly meet with tri-borough partners and neighbours Brent to share their good practice. They have also run two gang awareness training sessions and attend conferences regularly to spread their good practice.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a form of child abuse. In March 2016, the committee received a report on FGM in Westminster, which highlighted that as many as 770 school age girls could be at risk of FGM with approximately 250 school age girls being at a high risk of FGM in Westminster. The committee noted the steps being taken by the council to prevent FGM, including an innovative project based at St Mary's hospital and an extensive programme of community engagement work. Witnesses included the Director and an FGM Project Officer from the Midaye Somalia Development Network. The committee supported the need for sustainable funding for the project and the efforts made to identify funding from various sources. They also emphasised the importance that all social workers and practitioners were trained in countering FGM. Work is on-going in using new methods of identifying victims of FGM and in training a range of practitioners including in schools.

² The term used when the council takes legal responsibility for the child.

At its meeting in June 2015 the committee reviewed the **sports, leisure and physical activity opportunities** available in Westminster. The committee welcomed the report, which showed a very good overall offer provided by the Sports and Leisure Service. Committee highlighted the importance of enhancing the council's website and marketing strategy to ensure that Westminster's sports facilities were clearly advertised and promoted to the public. Concerns were raised around the methodology to provide ward estimates of the percentage of adults who participated in activity or recreation and the committee recommended that officers review the best measures to assess need in order to better target the sports and leisure offer. A key feature of the new leisure contract which was awarded to (Everyone Active in July 2016), is an improved approach to marketing and sales, particularly through social media, customer insight mechanisms, new retention programmes and a dedicated sales resource.

The committee also received an update on the **role of the Corporate Parent** and the educational outcomes of Looked after Children and Care Leavers. A key focus of the discussions was the difficulties faced by children in care. The committee recommended that the council undertake an analysis of the financial implications to the council of the changes in welfare benefit and their impact upon Care Leavers. It also recommended that the Tri-Borough Adult Safeguarding Team explore the adult safeguarding risks as a result of the Care Act; and that an updated report be brought back to the committee which provides further information on transition assessments in partnership with Adult Services. The Care Act implications were covered by the Adult Safeguarding report received by the Adults Health and Public Protection Committee.

In December 2015 the committee reviewed the **outcomes of the year's tests and examinations in primary and secondary schools** in Westminster and the key priorities for school improvement that emerged from the results. There was robust discussion about what could be done to further support schools to continue to maintain and improve their standards. The committee recommended that the council take further action to work closely with those schools which were falling below the national average in their examination results; explore ways to improve 'A' Level results; consider practical ways of expanding post-16

education to ensure that young people choose the correct learning pathway to equip them for work and/or further study; and support schools and governors with their teacher recruitment and retention strategies to ensure that they are able to recruit the best teachers and leaders for our schools. These recommendations have since been pulled through into the current priorities for the school standards service which leads on school improvement.



Environment and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee



Ian Adams
Chairman, Environment and
Customer Services Committee

What does the committee do?

The Environment Policy and Scrutiny Committee examines the wide range of council services that fall within the portfolios of built environment, city management, and customer services and the environment. Given the largest remit of the Policy and Scrutiny Committees, the Environment Committee provides 'critical friend' questioning to at least one of the following members of the Cabinet on rotation at each meeting:

- Cabinet Member for the Built Environment
- Cabinet Member for City Management and Customer Services
- Cabinet Member for Sustainability and Parking

This year's highlights

The committee gave in depth consideration to the proposed **Nine Elms to Pimlico pedestrian/cycle Bridge**. Following a petition to full council, the Leader asked this committee to scrutinise the proposals. The committee invited written evidence from individuals and organisations in advance of and after the meeting. The meeting was attended by approximately 100 members of the public and considered a report produced by the Head of Strategic Transport Planning & Public Realm. The proposed bridge was being promoted by the Nine Elms Vauxhall Partnership and by Wandsworth Council. The committee took evidence from a number of external experts and from two residents associations as well as Local Ward Councillor Angela Harvey who had presented the original petition on behalf of residents. The parties promoting the scheme were asked to take on board the concerns of members and residents regarding the need for greater public engagement. There has not to date been any further proposals from Wandsworth but the committee will keep a watching brief and reconsider any new proposals which come forward. This is an example of the committee shining a light on a matter of key concern to local people and stakeholders.

In March 2016 the committee followed up on **Broadband Coverage**, having initially considered the issues in early 2015. Evidence was heard from Councillor Jonathan Glanz, Lead Member for Connectivity, Kim Mears, Managing Director of BT Openreach, and Andrew Campling from BT Group. BT/Openreach reiterated their commitment to rolling out a programme of investment to deliver 142 additional broadband-ready street cabinets by the end of 2017. This was said to benefit 106,000 homes. The committee will continue to review progress against these commitments.

In June 2015, the committee held a public meeting at the University of Westminster Campus on Marylebone Road, where the details of the **Baker Street Two Way project** were scrutinised. The meeting was well attended by members of the public, local amenity groups and local ward members. The committee recommended that officers, in consultation with the Cabinet member, proceed with a further round of public consultation on the proposals before they are put before the cabinet. This further consultation took place along with two public exhibitions and a further report was issued and the scheme modified to take account of some of the

issues raised. The council are now at the final stage of consulting on details of traffic management measures. In short, the scheme has been improved as a result of the further consultation requested by committee.

Members received a report providing them with an update on the proposed Crossrail 2 scheme and its implications for Westminster. The meeting was attended by Gabrielle Coyle from the **Crossrail 2 team** at Transport for London. After hearing evidence about how much had been learnt from Crossrail 1 and the proposals for public consultation, the committee recommended that local residents should be made more aware of and be able to respond to the scheme.

On the issue of **Neighbourhood Planning** the committee heard that the council had moved into a new phase, a formal enabling role and where much of the city now has a neighbourhood forum. The committee took into account written evidence from Fitzrovia West Neighbourhood Forum and heard from Matthew Bennett of the Soho Neighbourhood Forum.

As a result of this scrutiny, officers have improved the website to provide better signposting to important information, encouraged the neighbourhood fora to contact each other for advice on best practice, considered how the council can manage expectations and improve responses.

This committee will continue to hold to account the public bodies which have an influence on the Quality of Life of local people, amenity groups and businesses. Many of these items will be revisited at the appropriate time to ensure that commitments given are delivered.

During this municipal year the committee also convened the Sustainable Travel Task Group which has shaped the development of the council's new Cycling Strategy and Walking Strategy.



Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee



Cllr Brian Connell
Chairman Housing, Finance
and Corporate Services Policy
and Scrutiny Committee

What does the Committee do?

The Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Committee scrutinises the following key policy areas and programmes: Housing management; Housing Regeneration; Corporate Property; Finance and Resources; Economic Development; and Corporate Services.

This year's highlights

The committee considered the council's **Corporate Property Strategy** taking evidence from the Corporation of London and Brook Investment Partners in order to assist with its deliberations. Their advice on how the council can best develop commercial development opportunities with private sector investors as equitable partners was welcomed by the committee. The committee endorsed the decision to stop funding the capital programme from asset sales; the use of the council's General Fund land and property assets to more effectively grow income streams to support front line services; the aim of reducing costs and increasing revenue from the rationalisation of the operational portfolio of the council. The establishment of the Property Investment Panel was also welcomed and the committee suggested that a member of the opposition party be included on its membership.

The **Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES)** provides education and training programmes to over 10,000 learners annually. An internal review of the service was carried out in early 2016 to reflect on the existing structure and to inform future positioning of the service ahead of a national programme of area reviews of post-16 education and training.

The committee considered the findings from the internal review in March 2016. It heard positive testimonial from a current service user that WAES is a much appreciated and valued provider of adult education and provides a positive contribution to Westminster's community with over 5,000 Westminster learners per year. The committee supported the focus of WAES in looking at how the service can support council priorities and the City for All ambition of reducing long-term unemployment and acknowledged the high level of assessment of the future challenges provided by the review. However, the committee thought the Service's future financial viability may be impacted by the London Area Review and recommended that further work be undertaken to assess this. This work has been carried out and there is confidence that the outcome of the review will not have any direct impact on the financial viability of WAES.

In April 2016, the committee received a report that provided an overview of national policy changes, as set out in the **Housing and Planning Bill**. The proposed legislation relates to affordable housing supply and regulation of the private rented sector. It was noted that the legislation combined the largest group of changes in the housing sector for some considerable time. The committee discussed with officers the potential impact on Westminster, the council's response to date and the council's lobbying objectives.

To aid its discussion the committee heard from the Chairman, Gerald Eve LLP, who provided a developer perspective on the proposed policy relating to starter homes and the implications for the City of Westminster in particular.

The committee expressed a number of concerns. These included, the lack of detail that had been published regarding some of the policy details and how they would work, many of which will be determined in regulations; the potential loss of money arising from the sale of high-value local authority voids; and the challenges on delivering the starter homes requirement and its impact on the delivery of other forms of affordable housing.

Following these discussions the committee recommended, to the Leader of the council and the Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration, Business & Economic Development, that the council should join with other interested parties, including Westminster's development sector, to undertake joint lobbying activities. This recommendation has been accepted and jointly lobbying work is currently under way.

Budget and Performance Task Group

This task group meets annually to scrutinise the council's budget options and draft business plans. Membership of this group is taken from across the Scrutiny Committees.

The task group examined, in detail, proposals put forward from across the council's directorates. Chief officers also provided assurances on a number of risk areas that were highlighted. The task group concluded that the draft budget appeared robust with no major changes required. They did recommend that for future meetings, the revenue implications of capital programmes be included in reviews by the task group, in order to clarify the link between capital and revenue expenditure. This will be done for 2016/17.



Thanks and Further Information

The Committee Chairmen wish to thank:

- all the councillors involved in the Policy and Scrutiny Committees and task groups
- the Cabinet members for their ongoing support and appearances at the committees
- all the independent witnesses who give their time and expertise
- the officers who prepare and present the reports

If you would like more information about how scrutiny works at Westminster or wish to make a suggestion about areas that one of the committees may wish to scrutinise, please contact us at **scrutiny2@westminster.gov.uk** or by calling us on **020 7641 2636**.

You can also view our scrutiny pages on our website **westminster.gov.uk/policy-and-scrutiny**

The work programme for the year 2015/16 for each committee is shown in Appendix 1, attached.

Appendix 1

Work programmes for 2015/16

Adults, Health and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

The NHS Estate in Westminster

NHS Safeguarding in the acute sector.

Policing and mental health

Adult Social Care complaints and performance.

Safeguarding- employment checks

The Patient Journey-mapping the experience of Westminster residents

Finding and Supporting Carers

Strategic Approaches to Public Health

Needs Modelling in Westminster

Implementation of Shaping a Healthier Future

Holding to account the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Health Urgency Sub-committee

Reconfiguration of stroke services.

Children, Sports and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Sports and Leisure Service Review

The annual review of looked after children, care leavers and corporate parenting

The Integrated Gangs Unit

The Annual Safeguarding Review

The Annual Education Report

Children's Centres

The Regional Schools Commissioner

Year 6 to year 7 transition

The Children and Families of Service personnel

Female Genital Mutilation

Child Sexual Exploitation

The school organisation and investment strategy

A review of PE and school sports activity

OFSTED and Youth Offending Service Inspections

Environment and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Baker Street two-way proposals

Code of Construction Practice

Crossrail 2

Cycling Strategy

Baker Street two-way system-update

Nine Elms Bridge

Broadband Coverage-improving connectivity in Westminster

Open Spaces Strategy

Neighbourhood planning

Air Quality

Waste Disposal Contract

Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The Housing Strategy

Review of Housing Management Options

The Impact of Welfare and Housing Reform

The Housing Strategy- consultation responses and analysis on housing targets

Property Investment Strategy

Housing Association performance and CityWest Homes resident satisfaction

Draft Treasury Management Strategy 2016/17

Treasury performance half year statutory review

Housing Policy Development 1% social rent decrease and the Pay to Stay Policy

Westminster Adult Education Service Strategic Review

The supply and allocation of social housing

Housing and Planning Bill implications for Westminster and affordable housing supply

Total Facilities Management

