

Vulnerable Adults, Health & Communities Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date of meeting:	Thursday 17 th October 2024
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Community Hubs Programme – Direction of Travel
Report of:	Frances Martin, Executive Director of Environment & Communities Serena Simon, Director of Communities
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Communities
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	The Community Hubs Programme aims to support #2035 and the Fairer Westminster agenda by improving access to integrated council, health and VCS services, and creating spaces for residents to connect, run activities and improve their health and wellbeing.
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an update on the Council's proposed Community Hubs Programme, which aims to improve access to integrated council, health and VCS services across the city. It includes a response to a number of questions focused on the proposed programme approach and work undertaken to date, ahead of a substantive Community Hubs item scheduled for the Committee in March 2025.
- 1.2. In 2022, Westminster City Council launched its new Fairer Westminster agenda, establishing a range of commitments to improve life outcomes for Westminster residents under five key pillars.
- 1.3. The Fairer Westminster plan includes the delivery of a set of new 'Community Hubs' which should bring communities together to make it easy

for everyone to access services and support across our neighbourhoods, by:

- Working in a place-based way, recognising the unique assets, opportunities, priorities and needs of communities living in different neighbourhoods
- Reducing health inequalities, including those faced by our Global Majority communities
- Making contacting council officers and accessing support much easier, and improving how we work to provide effective and timely resolution of issues
- Improving how we listen to our residents and incorporate their views into our work, informed by the new Charter for Community Participation
- Furthermore, Community Hubs will support the Council's broader corporate ambitions and statutory obligations, with regards to equalities, the climate emergency and its Strategic Asset Management Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan commitments. Community Hubs are also named in the Future of Westminster Commission report.

- 1.4. The Community Hubs Programme Approach Cabinet Member Report decision was taken by the Cabinet Member for Communities on Friday 26th September, outlining the approach to programme delivery and site identification, reflecting feedback and recommendations from the March 2024 VAHC Policy & Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 1.5. The Community Hubs Programme is aligned with wider Council, health and voluntary sector activity, including through membership of the Westminster Integrated Neighbourhood Teams Leadership Group (NHS), Early Help Partnership Board (Family Hubs), Westminster VCS networks (North and South) and internal forums including Libraries and Housing.
- 1.6. The report seeks the Committee's scrutiny and recommendations on the design, delivery and evaluation of the Community Hubs Programme, with a focus on the links to health outcomes and partnerships.
- 1.7. The report does not focus on individual Community Hub sites identified, but rather on the programme approach across Westminster, and the principles and practices which will be applied to embed and deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes across the city, through the programme.

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

- 2.1. Following the Community Hubs item at the Committee in March 2024, the Committee requested that further information be provided in relation to a number of subsequent questions, with a focus on the approach to developing Ernest Harriss House and Bayswater Children's Centre community hubs:

- 2.1.1. What is the impact on the local community and how has communication with residents been carried out?
 - 2.1.2. How has the recruitment of the organisations and decisions about who the Council partners with been decided?
 - 2.1.3. How have the individual services and the intended model for the hubs been determined? How will they contribute to the uptake of health services and better outcomes?
 - 2.1.4. What is the management model of the community hubs and the intended organisational support by the Council? How much control will the Council retain of the hub sites?
 - 2.1.5. Financial implications - how can we ensure the decisions made are the right decisions for the communities they serve? What is the breakdown of the intended spending (up to £10million over the next 2-3 years) on the development of the programme?
 - 2.1.6. How are the outcomes and ongoing reviewing process of the hubs going to be carried out? Will key performance indicators and regular review schedules with partners be implemented, when, and how?
 - 2.1.7. How the Community Hubs fit with wider council services including Family Hubs, housing service centres and libraries.
- 2.2. The Committee is invited to provide feedback on the approach taken to date, and on the ways in which the Community Hubs Programme should continue to engage and deliver in order to best deliver outcomes, work with partner organisations and communities, and complement existing services and support.

3. Background, including policy context

- 3.1. The Community Hubs Programme is an ambitious and innovative initiative that aims to improve the lives of Westminster residents by creating accessible, collaborative and co-designed spaces across the city. The programme has five key objectives: to increase community resilience and reduce health inequalities; to provide better access to services and support; to enhance collaboration between the council and the communities; to strengthen civil society and the voluntary sector; and to contribute to the council's equalities, climate emergency and financial commitments. The previous Policy & Scrutiny Committee Report is included in Appendix 1 for reference.
- 3.2. The Programme aims to improve outcomes on a local basis by improving access to joined up services and support – a priority identified through the Council's Global Majority Communities JSNA, which highlighted that many of our communities do not experience effective access to support – and investing in additional community spaces to bring groups from across a given locality together – a characteristic of areas with stronger social networks, trust and resilience. Accordingly, the Programme Lead sits on the

Westminster Early Help Partnership Board and the Westminster Integrated Neighbourhood Team Leadership Group.

- 3.3. Officers have developed a programme approach, undertaken extensive community engagement to inform community hub proposals for Ernest Harriss House and Bayswater Children's Centre community hubs and launched pilot 'mini hubs' at Charing Cross and Victoria Libraries.
- 3.4. The purpose of launching 'mini hubs' ahead of the official Programme Approach decision and wider programme launch has been to test and learn 'what works' in relation to improving access to services and support, and community connection. This will also enable the Council to test how the Community Hubs and Libraries offers complement each other, increase reach and generate wider learning. This aligns with the Programme's approach to continuously evolve the design and offer of/at each Community Hub, based on learning and evaluation.
- 3.5. Communication with residents has been undertaken in the following ways:
 - Engagement and outreach, comprising street engagement, door-knocking and community events: residents have been engaged across north, central and south areas, and in proximity to proposed hub sites, to hear about the programme and share their views.
 - Printed publicity and leaflet drops: leaflets sharing information about the Community Hubs programme and opportunities to feed back have been distributed on street, via partner organisations and through letterboxes, including on or close to proposed hub sites.
 - North Paddington Programme, Register Of Active Residents, Westminster Connects and other formal Council activities: residents have been contacted through existing channels to promote opportunities to participate in the Community Hubs programme.
 - Online engagement, forms and mailing lists: residents have registered for further information via the Council's Community Hubs Commonplace site, or have directly completed online forms and surveys.
- 3.6. The impact on local communities to date has been as follows:
 - The Charing Cross and Victoria Library mini hubs launched in late July 2024 for three days a week at each site, with a summer programme of council, health and voluntary sector support, community-led activities and informal drop-ins. An early review of the mini hubs indicates:
 - Across the two sites, the mini hubs received over 600 visits from individual residents during the summer period
 - Five Council and wider partner services were involved in delivering weekly 'support drop-ins' to residents

- 58 tickets to London Zoo were distributed to families in need for the summer holidays
- 128 workshops and activities were delivered – 56 at Charing Cross and 71 at Victoria – with the offer being reviewed in response to feedback
- Of residents who completed feedback surveys, 86% said that they had made a new connection, and 91% said they had learnt a new skill – 38% had never been to the library site before and 60% heard about another service during their visit
- Over 80% of partners surveyed said that their organisation had made a new connection
- Ernest Harriss House and Bayswater Children’s Centre community hub proposals have been shaped through extensive engagement with communities, firstly through open engagement and outreach to identify community priorities, and subsequently through a series of co-design workshops. Residents reported that they felt the workshops:
 - Produced designs (90%) and models (93%) which best fulfilled community priorities on the site
 - Improved the overall proposals (98%) and made them feel more part of local decision-making (95%)
 - Connected residents with new people in their area (95%) and made them feel more part of their local community (90%)
 - Enabled residents to gain new understanding, skills and/or knowledge (98%)

3.7. Organisations have been invited to participate in engagement and co-design activities through an open call via direct engagement, council or programme communities and wider council networks. Organisations have also been invited to register an interest in future opportunities to apply to operate Bayswater Children’s Centre and Ernest Harriss House community hubs.

3.8. In relation to the Charing Cross and Victoria Library mini hubs pilots, organisations were contacted through Council, Communities department, Libraries service and broader engagement, and invited to apply to run activities from the hub spaces. Applications were subsequently assessed and incorporated into the immediate summer programme, or earmarked for a future programme, on the basis of strategic fit and availability.

3.9. Individual services have been identified in relation to each community hub primarily through community engagement and analysis of existing provision in the local area. In relation to the mini hubs, council services and partner organisations have been approached to deliver as part of council support drop-ins or the wider programme over the summer period. Demand for services will be reviewed on an ongoing basis through evaluation and further engagement.

This principle applies to the programme as a whole: each hub and the configuration and offer of services at each site should evolve over time to meet changing community needs.

- 3.10. The effectiveness of the community hubs in contributing to the uptake of health services and wider outcomes will be evaluated through the theory of change developed for the programme as a whole, which was developed in partnership with council, partner and resident stakeholders, and through the outcomes framework created for each individual community hub. This includes how hubs align with Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, and facilitate the uptake of health services, e.g. as an easily accessible location for a vaccination clinic, or contributing to health and wellbeing through fitness classes, healthy food and reducing isolation.
- 3.11. The success of the Community Hubs will be assessed through the Programme's outcomes framework, which was developed with input from officers and a wide range of stakeholders and will be reviewed and updated in relation to each Hub. (A headline version of this can be seen in the original Programme Initiation Document for Community Hubs: its focus is on how the hubs improve access to services and support, and increase community connection, contributing to prevention and early intervention.) Furthermore, the Programme will be evaluated externally, in addition to internal monitoring and evaluation.
- 3.12. It is anticipated that voluntary sector organisations may be well positioned to operate community hubs, particularly in relation to the programme's aims of strengthening community connections and improving access to services and support. In these scenarios, the Council retains the ability to intervene or review arrangements if standards, reporting requirements and/or deliverables included contracts and/or service agreements are not met.
- 3.13. The programme aims to commission a formal evaluation through which outcomes, deliverables and learnings are captured and fed into the programme's development, and the wider organisation. Partner organisations will be required to feed into and participate in the evaluation process, in line with respective service level agreements.
- 3.14. Section 4 provides an overview of the proposed budget profile for the Community Hubs programme, which is subject to ongoing review. In order to ensure that each hub site and proposal represents value for money and best serves Westminster's communities, each is identified through a process of reviewing priority neighbourhoods and assets, and the development of a business case which assesses outlay against outcomes and benefits.
- 3.15. The Community Hubs programme aims to complement existing services and support, including Family Hubs, housing service centres and libraries. This is achieved through:
 - The mapping and site identification process by which a proposed hub site is identified: this looks at surrounding assets, partners and services, including

whether they are currently or well positioned to deliver a community hub offer.

- Operating as part of an existing service offer, for example incorporating, commissioning or adding a community hub offer, innovation or component to an existing site.
- Providing a satellite or additional site for service delivery, for example offering a base from which a council or other service can additionally deliver and better reach residents.

4. Financial Implications

The financial implications, risks and opportunities associated with the programme are as follows:

- 4.1. The Community Hubs programme has a £10m capital allocation for the delivery of Community Hubs across Westminster from 2023/24 – 2026/27. It is also considered that there are sufficient revenue contributions within the capital programme to allow for some changes to the £10m capital spend – i.e. some can be allocated to elements of delivery which are now considered revenue within the Programme.
- 4.2. The establishment of new, additional or expanded sites for community activity and service delivery will require additional revenue funding to maintain operations, which will need to be considered in the context of the benefits to be delivered, the Council's existing cost pressures and in relation to its broader estate and obligations. Any additional costs that may be required will be developed through the development of respective hub business cases, and later requested through the budget setting process as required, and relevant approval sought.
- 4.3. The programme may generate financial benefits through increased service efficiency, effectiveness and integration, as well as improved social value and community wellbeing. These benefits may be realised through reduced demand for services, increased income from services, improved asset utilisation and management, and enhanced social return on investment. Any benefits that are found will be included in future years budget setting processes.
- 4.4. The programme may also create financial opportunities for collaboration and partnership with other organisations, such as the voluntary and community sector, local businesses, educational institutions and health and social care providers. These opportunities may in due course result in shared resources, co-investment, co-delivery and co-commissioning of services and activities, as well as increased innovation and diversity of provision.
- 4.5. Consideration should be given to the financial risks and opportunities associated with the contents of the report.

5. Legal and Governance Implications

- 5.1. The Community Hubs programme is overseen by a Spotlight Leadership Group comprising the Lead Member (Cabinet Member for Communities), Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Housing, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Public Protection, and Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, Public Health and Voluntary Sector and Lead Member SEN and Learning Disabilities Champion, in addition to senior leaders from across the organisation. Its delivery is supported through a programme delivery board, to be established.
- 5.2. The programme needs to comply with the relevant statutory and contractual obligations that apply to the council and its partners, including planning (including any potential change of use implications), procurement (including tender requirements incorporating accountability, delivery and outcome requirements), health and safety, data protection, equalities and human rights. This may require obtaining legal advice, conducting due diligence, drafting and reviewing agreements, and ensuring quality and compliance standards.
- 5.3. The programme needs to ensure that Community Hubs are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs and aspirations of the local residents, especially those from disadvantaged or marginalised groups. This will require conducting equality impact assessments, engaging with diverse communities and stakeholders, and embedding EDI principles and practices in the co-design and delivery of the hubs.
- 5.4. The programme needs to establish clear and transparent governance arrangements for the community hubs, including the roles and responsibilities of the Council, the operators, the service providers and the community representatives. This may require developing governance frameworks, terms of reference, performance indicators, reporting mechanisms, and accountability processes.
- 5.5. The programme needs to monitor and evaluate the impact and value of the community hubs, both individually and collectively, on the social and economic outcomes of the local area and the council's strategic objectives. This will require setting up evaluation frameworks, collecting and analysing data and information, and reporting and disseminating findings and recommendations.

6. Carbon Impact

- 6.1. The Community Hubs programme aims to contribute to the Council's commitment to becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and a carbon neutral city by 2040. The programme will assess the carbon impact of each hub site and seek to minimise the emissions associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the hubs. The programme will also work with Corporate Property and Climate Emergency colleagues to enhance the environmental sustainability and resilience of the hubs, such as by using renewable energy sources, improving energy efficiency,

reducing waste and water consumption, and promoting site greening. The programme will report on the carbon impact of each hub site as part of the business case and evaluation process.

6.2. The following bullet points summarise the main actions that the programme will take to reduce the carbon impact of the community hubs:

- Assess the baseline and projected emissions of each hub site, taking into account the building type, size, location, design, materials, usage and occupancy.
- Apply circular economy principles to minimise the use of materials and resources, maximise the reuse and recycling of materials, and avoid the generation of waste in the construction and operation of the hubs.
- Incorporate low-carbon and energy-efficient technologies and solutions in the design and retrofit of the hubs, e.g. smart meters, insulation and ventilation systems etc.
- Engage with hub users, operators, partners and suppliers to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change towards reducing energy consumption, waste generation and water use in the hubs, and to promote the use of sustainable modes of transport, such as walking, cycling and public transport.
- Monitor, evaluate and report on the carbon impact of the hubs on an ongoing basis, as part of regular progress, review and evaluation reports, highlighting the achievements, challenges and lessons learned, and identifying areas for improvement and further action.

7. Equalities Impact

7.1. The Community Hubs programme forms part of the Fairer Westminster strategy and the Council's #2035 ambitions to tackle health inequalities. Its focus is on responding to existing inequalities through the provision of new spaces, joined up services and local activities. The impact of this work is intended to improve outcomes for people with protected characteristics.

7.2. Each Community Hub will serve a different geographical area, with different needs and populations. An equalities lens will be applied to the planning, development, engagement and delivery of each Community Hub, for which a business case including an EQIA will be produced. This will ensure that the programme evidences how it meets its equality duty in different contexts through a consistent process.

8. Consultation and Engagement

8.1. The Community Hubs programme is based on taking a collaborative approach to design and delivery with Westminster's communities, as well as partner organisations and wider stakeholders:

- In the physical design of community hubs, working with design professionals to inform plans, shape spaces and agree specifications
 - In the programme development and design of each community hub, both feeding into and shaping the programme of activity and combination of services which operate from each site
 - In governance and management of community hubs, shaping the operating model through a co-design process and playing an active and ongoing role in governance, management and decision-making
 - In evaluation and monitoring, through governance and communications, providing feedback on their experiences and the effectiveness of each hub, and reviewing performance on the basis of monitoring data
- 8.2. Engagement has been undertaken with Cabinet and ward members to inform the initial scope of the programme from its inception, reflected in an updated Programme Approach CMR decision with a deeper focus on collaboration across Council services.
- 8.3. Engagement has been undertaken with ward members in relation to the development and/or launch of Community Hubs, including mini hubs, in their wards. This has included direct engagement and invitation to participate in co-design workshops and activities.
- 8.4. Each Community Hub is co-designed with residents, partners and internal stakeholders, with a brief developed through community engagement. Around 750 residents have been engaged to date through the Community Hubs programme, with a report to be produced for the north, south and central parts of Westminster respectively on completion.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Report Author, rauthor@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1: Policy & Scrutiny Committee Report (March 2024)

Appendix 2: Map of Community Hubs

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Community Hubs Project Initiation Document \(2024\)](#)

[Community Hubs Programme Approach CMR \(2024\)](#)