

Maida Vale Area Forum
Chairman: Cllr Ian Adams
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Dear Maida Vale Area Forum member,

Thank you to all who were able to attend the recent Maida Vale Area Forum and help us to make decisions that affect your local area. Your views are important to us, so I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know what we are planning to do in response to your feedback.

At our last meeting on Thursday 17 November, five workshops were held to give you the opportunity to comment on changes to One Stop services, tackling youth violence in North West Westminster, council savings plans, the Olympics and the launch of Westminster's Community Governance Review consultation. If you would like more detail on the workshops or neighbourhood fund spending contact our Area Forums team or visit www.westminster.gov.uk/neighbourhoods

Changes to One Stop Services

The Harrow Road and Church Street One Stops closed on 16th December 2011. Online payment facilities are being improved and simplified, and Westminster residents can now also pay for council services in local post office branches. Some estate offices will also be able to take payments by card. You were concerned about the level of service and queuing times at Post Offices but we assured you that that the council has a contract with the Post Office and this will be monitored closely to ensure they are meeting service requirements. A map is enclosed showing the best times to visit post offices with the shortest queuing times.

Branded PCs will also be provided in 10 locations across Westminster including libraries, estate offices and children's and community centres. A member of staff will also be on hand in libraries to help show people how to use the online services. A number of free phones to the council will also be available across the city, including in libraries.

Tackling Youth Violence

The Neighbourhood Crime Reduction Team reported that there had been several serious incidents of youth violence and gang tensions in the North West of Westminster in recent months. In response, the council and police have developed the 'Your Choice' gang diversion strategy. The aim is to provide a range of projects and initiatives to identify young people involved in or at risk of being involved in gangs, diversion from gang related activities and enforcement against those who persist with negative behaviours. A total of £313,000 has been dedicated to the delivery of the 'Your Choice' strategy and a lobbying campaign aimed at the Greater London Authority and Central Government is currently underway to secure longer term sustainable funding so the programme can be run for at least 3 years, in order to make a significant impact. Full details of the 'Your Choice' gang strategy can be found at: http://transact.westminster.gov.uk/committee/index.cfm?c_docs=Cabinet/2011/26%20September%202011 (Appendix 2). If you have any questions relating to the strategy please email Caroline at ctredwell@westminster.gov.uk.

Council savings plans

As a result in the reduction in the level of funding the council receives from Central Government, we have already made efficiency savings of £60 million so far this year. This has included a reduction of £20 million from back office service and staff savings in departments such as HR, IT and finance. You were concerned that the cuts to staff numbers would affect our ability to respond to issues effectively. However, cuts to staff numbers are being made through a carefully planned restructuring process, so that roles are being combined and modified to ensure service levels are maintained.

The council's budget will be reduced again from April 2012, so further efficiencies and initiatives will be needed to protect front line services as far as possible. We are currently looking at options to increase revenue, such as using the capability and reputation of our existing pest control team to sell its services to other companies and organisations.

Traffic Management plans for the Olympics

There will be a dedicated Olympic Route Network (ORN) running through central London during the Olympic period, which will see some lanes dedicated for use by the Olympic family which includes athletes, their families and the media. All roads on this network are dual carriageway, so one lane will still be useable by cars, bikes, taxis and buses. Congestion is likely on these routes however, so it is recommended that you try to avoid these areas and walk or cycle where possible. A map showing the ORN can be viewed at www.tfl.gov.uk/orn. There are only two main roads that will be fully closed to vehicles throughout the games - Constitution Hill and Birdcage Walk. You queried whether the Parks would be closed for normal use during the games. We advised there would be some limitations to the numbers allowed in the Parks. Hyde Park also plans to host a live site within the park for which free tickets will be available to view the Games on large screens. More information to help you get around during the games can be found on www.tfl.gov.uk/2012

Community Governance Review consultation

Having received a petition to establish a Community (Parish) Council in Queen's Park, Westminster City Council has resolved to conduct a Community Governance Review of Westminster. The review will consider how the council can work with local communities, and in particular will make recommendations on whether or not to establish new parishes, the electoral arrangements of any new parish council, and whether or not to introduce any new community governance arrangements other than those relating to parishes and parish councils. The consultation will run until 3rd February 2012.

You asked why Queen's Park wanted to be a parish council, and we explained that there was strong local support for a local democratic body to represent the views and interests of the community within Queens Park. You asked if there was interest in this from areas other than Queen's Park and we explained that this is why we are carrying out the review.

If you would like to find out more, or give your views, please visit www.westminster.gov.uk/communitygovernance/. If you would prefer us to post you a hard copy of the consultation, please let us know.

Neighbourhood Funds – how should yours be spent? Maida Vale, Queen's Park, Little Venice and Harrow Road

Neighbourhood Funds are dedicated funds to support local projects and priorities. They enable councillors to address the local issues that matter most to residents. Some funds have already been allocated across all four wards with projects funded including greening in Maida Vale and an additional weekly recycling collection in Little Venice. Harrow Road councillors have supported a community newsletter and community choir, and Queen's Park have funded a youth club at St Jude's.

Wards still have some funding to allocate so please put forward any further suggestions to your ward councillors via the contact details at the bottom of this page. To see a full list of projects funded to date, visit www.westminster.gov.uk/neighbourhoods. To find out which electoral ward you are in please visit www.westminster.gov.uk/wardfinder.

Your next Maida Vale Forum

I look forward to welcoming you to the next Maida Vale Area Forum on Thursday 15th March; Paddington Academy, 50 Marylands Road, London W9 2DR. If you have any ideas for agenda items or a place to hold the meeting in future, please do let us hear your thoughts. To get in touch or for more information, please contact the Area Forums team using the contact details on the front page of this letter.



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